

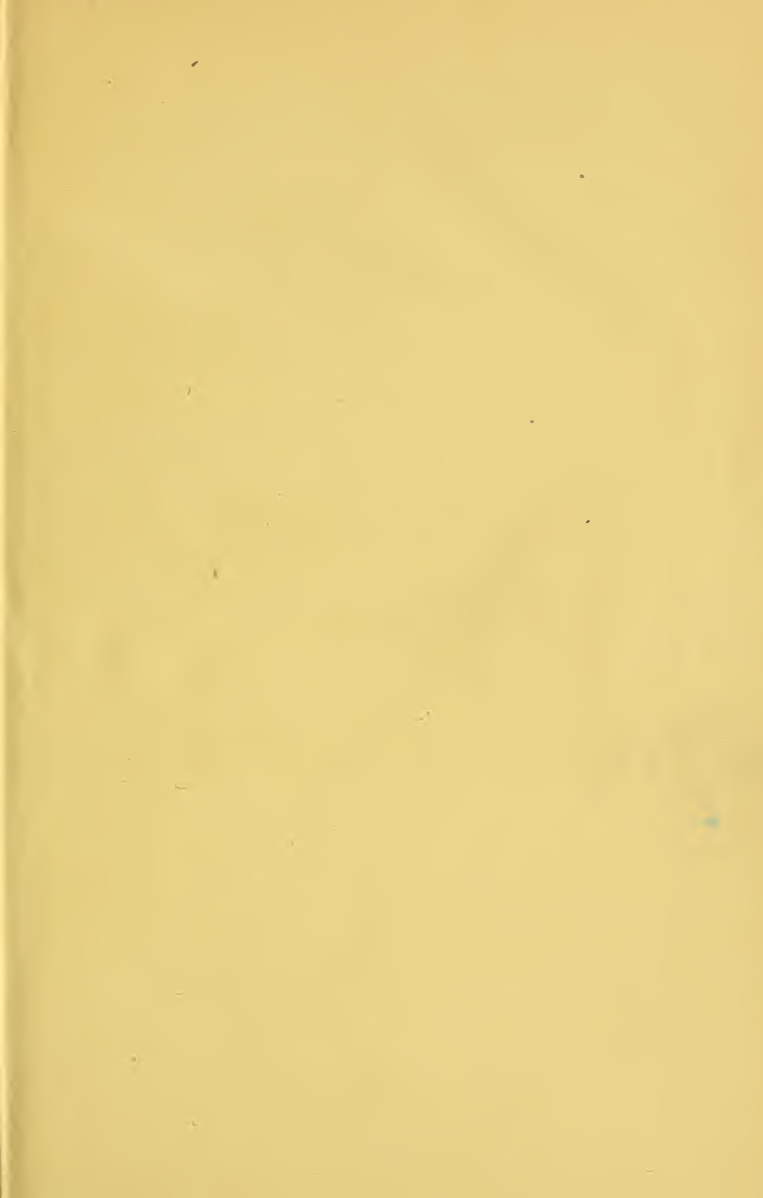
# Home Whispers

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. <sup>BX 8915</sup> Copyright No. ....

Shelf. N 35 ..

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.











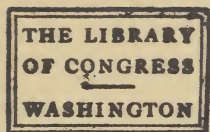
# HOME WHISPERS.

BY THE  
✓  
REV. HENRY A. NELSON, D. D.



PHILADELPHIA :  
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,  
1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

1884



BX 8915  
.N35

---

COPYRIGHT, 1884, BY  
THE TRUSTEES OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

---

*ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.*

---

WESTCOTT & THOMSON,  
*Stereotypers and Electrotypers, Philada.*

WITH THANKFUL MEMORY AND REVERENT LOVE I DEDICATE  
THIS VOLUME TO HER WHOSE LOVE MADE MY  
HOME, AND STILL HALLOWS IT—

“———that being beauteous  
Who unto my youth was given,  
More than all things else, to love me,  
And is now a saint in heaven.”

H. A. N.





# CONTENTS.

---

I.	PAGE
HOME . . . . .	II
II.	
THE HALLOWING OF HOME . . . . .	15
III.	
FAMILY WORSHIP . . . . .	19
IV.	
FAMILY GOVERNMENT . . . . .	26
V.	
THE RELATION OF DOMESTIC VIRTUE TO PUBLIC VIRTUE .	30
VI.	
GOD'S RELATION TO MOTHERS . . . . .	34
VII.	
CHRIST'S RELATION TO MOTHERS . . . . .	38
VIII.	
THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE FAMILY . . . . .	43
IX.	
THE SALVATION OF INFANTS . . . . .	55

	PAGE
X.	
INFANT CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP . . . . .	68
XI.	
TERMINATION OF INFANT CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP . . . .	78
XII.	
LITTLE COMMUNICANTS . . . . .	84
XIII.	
THE BEGINNING OF LOVE . . . . .	92
XIV.	
THE HONOR DUE TO WEAKNESS . . . . .	95
XV.	
POLISH AND SOLIDITY . . . . .	99
XVI.	
THE LORD HEARKENING . . . . .	102
XVII.	
ELKANAH . . . . .	107
XVIII.	
THE CHILDLESS . . . . .	111
XIX.	
BRING THE CHILDREN . . . . .	116
XX.	
"MARY!"—"RABBONI!" . . . . .	119
XXI.	
THE WITNESSING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT . . . . .	123

XXII.

	PAGE
OBEY THE SPIRIT . . . . .	126

XXIII.

FILIAL TRUST . . . . .	130
------------------------	-----

XXIV.

FROM BETHEL TO PENIEL . . . . .	136
---------------------------------	-----

XXV.

SYMPATHY AND PRAYER . . . . .	145
-------------------------------	-----

XXVI.

PRAYER OF THE UNCONVERTED . . . . .	150
-------------------------------------	-----

XXVII.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER . . . . .	153
-----------------------------	-----

XXVIII.

"UNANSWERED PRAYER" . . . . .	159
-------------------------------	-----

XXIX.

MOVING MOUNTAINS . . . . .	163
----------------------------	-----

XXX.

WRITING TO GOD . . . . .	167
--------------------------	-----

XXXI.

"THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN" . . . . .	174
-----------------------------------	-----

XXXII.

"THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN" . . . . .	180
--	-----

XXXIII.

"CAST A HOOK" . . . . .	188
-------------------------	-----

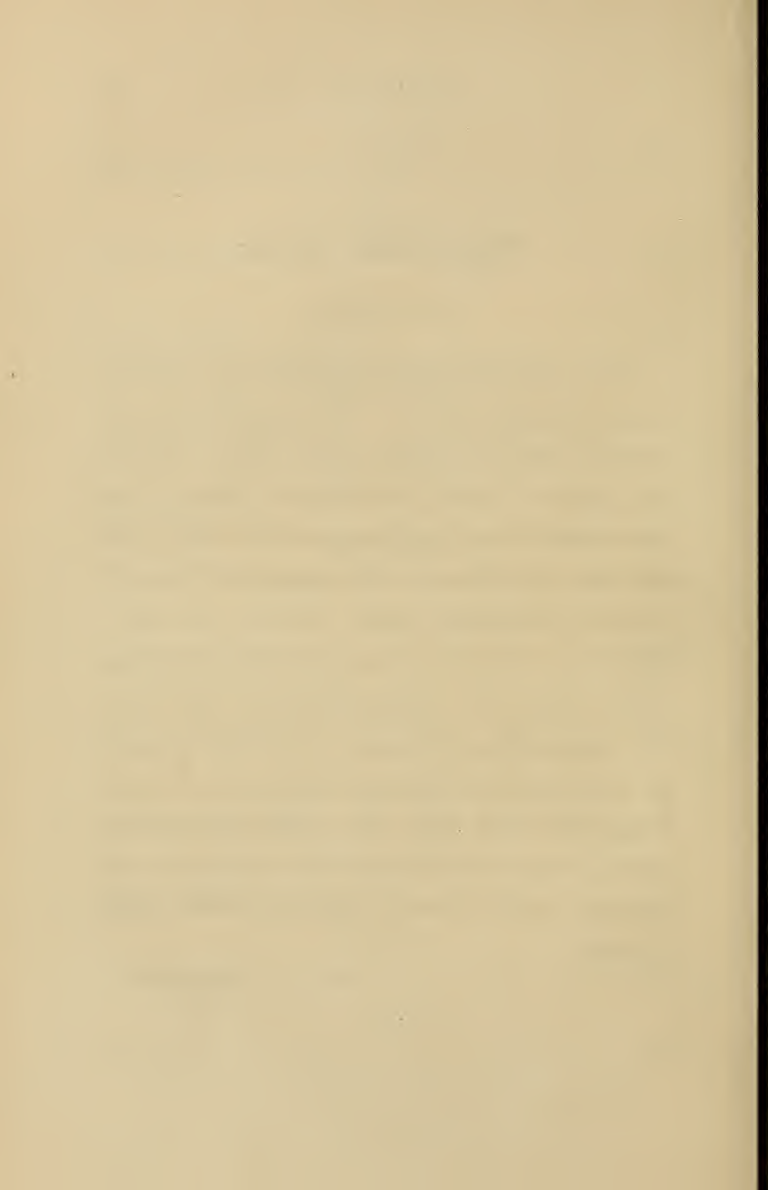
XXXIV.	
THE BURDEN DROPPED ENTIRELY . . . . .	PAGE 616
XXXV.	
THE LION-LAMB . . . . .	205
XXXVI.	
JOHN'S EMBASSY TO JESUS . . . . .	212
XXXVII.	
THE GOD OF HOPE . . . . .	217
XXXVIII.	
THE KINGDOM OF GOD . . . . .	223
XXXIX.	
THE LORD'S MARTYRS . . . . .	229
XL.	
CONVICTION OF SIN . . . . .	234
XLI.	
A CALM CONVERSION . . . . .	241
XLII.	
COBDEN AND BRIGHT . . . . .	247
XLIII.	
ELDER WYCKOFF . . . . .	251
XLIV.	
GOD'S POEM . . . . .	258
XLV.	
WITH THE LORD . . . . .	262

## PREFATORY NOTE.

---

THIS volume is not a continuous treatise—not strictly a book. It is a collection of essays, most of which have been printed in some of our periodicals. More than one reader has kindly expressed the desire for the republication of several of them in a more permanent form. From none have kinder words of encouragement come than from editors in whose columns they have had hospitable welcome. So large a part of them are on domestic themes as to have suggested the title, the right to which, I hope, is not forfeited to the volume by including some home-ly talks on some other themes.

H. A. N.





# HOME WHISPERS.

---

## I.

### HOME.

"'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!  
A charm from the skies seems to hallow us here,  
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere.  
Home! home! sweet, sweet home!  
There's no place like home."

"A CHARM from the skies" indeed it is that sweetens and hallows to human souls one "place," one spot of earth, above all others. More definitely, the Christian heart may translate the poetic phrase "a charm from the skies" into "a blessing from God." "So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be

fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1 : 27, 28). So "He who made them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matt. 19 : 4). So in duality of person, in diversity of sex, in unity of being, the Lord God created man. The family is as old as the race. Home was instituted in Eden. Paradise with all its flowers would not have been home without the union in mutual love of that pure human pair. The pure, true, faithful love of a human pair makes any place in which they dwell together home. His blessing has its complete fulfillment when he gives them offspring, and the olive-plants about their table fill the place with the sweet fragrance of the "oil of gladness."

To the one earthly creature who was capable of realizing the divine idea of home, dominion was fitly given over all other creatures upon the earth. Their lower loves might multiply their offspring in nests, in

lairs, in fields and in the deep waters, and might fulfill the lower enjoyment of which their lower nature was capable: the holy blessedness which God reserved for the creature whom he made in his own image he purposed to fulfill in home.

When the first human sin blighted the fair hope of a perpetual earthly Paradise, no sorer woe befell mankind than the despoiling of home. Truthfully the great poet of Paradise pictures this woe, where he says of Adam and Eve, when they had just put on their poor fig-leaves—

“ They sat them down to weep; nor only tears  
Rain'd at their eyes, but high winds worse within  
Began to rise; high passions, anger, hate,  
Mistrust, suspicion, discord; and shook sore  
Their inward state of mind, calm region once  
And full of peace, now tost and turbulent.”

All that is truly told us of the degradation and miserable enslavement of woman in all lands which lack the light of divine revelation may be summed up in the statement that there they know not the sanctity nor the blessedness of home. A native of Japan,\* Christianized, educated, preparing in

\* Rev. Naomi Zamma.

America to preach to his people the gospel of redemption, when asked by his friends in Japan to write to them of America's greatest wonder, wrote somewhat as follows: "It is not the vast breadth of their continental land; not their immense system of railroads; not their sublime mountains and their mighty rivers; not their populous cities, their vast combinations of capital, their audacious enterprises, their marvelous accumulations of wealth; not even their noble schools and asylums and churches. The greatest wonder in Christian America is the Christian home." He was right, and when Japan and Corea and China and India and Siam and Africa shall be filled with Christian homes, then indeed the peaceful reign of Immanuel will be established. Then "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."

## II.

### THE HALLOWING OF HOME.

THE seventh of God's Ten Commandments guards and hallows the family and the home—guards them by hallowing them. It recognizes the right of every husband and wife to the exclusive possession of each other, and gives to that right the sanction and protection of God. The demand for exclusive affection and possession in wedlock is no selfish exaction. It belongs to no low impulses of our nature. Its strength and its strenuousness are proportioned to the elevation and refinement of the whole womanly and the whole manly nature. The divine commandment adds peculiar sanctity to this human right. That which on natural grounds the husband and wife owe to each other, God also demands as due to him, who "made them male and female." All those peculiar powers and af-

fections which distinguish the sexes, and at the same time make them attract each other, which distinguish man and woman from each other, and at the same time make them consciously need each other,—all these powers and affections are regulated by this commandment.

The conjugal relation is pre-eminently sacred. Marriage is a “holy estate.” It is the symbol of all else that is holy upon the earth. Even Christ deems it the worthy type of his own relation to his Church. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5 : 23–25. See also Rev. 19 : 7, 8 and 21 : 2, 9).

The sanctity which God’s word gives to the parental relation is of unspeakable value to the children. The pure delight in their offspring which only a married pair can feel who are true to each other is necessary to



that parental character to which children are indebted for the best influences of their life. Parents who are not true to each other are not capable of giving their children either the securities or the blessed influence of a true home. The child of a mother "the heart of whose husband cannot safely trust in her," or of a father whose affection roves away from her to whom it is plighted, has its young life touched with a dismal blight. The most subtile and penetrating of evil influences distill upon its cradle, poison the air which it breathes and the very milk wherewith it is nourished.

The seventh commandment, faithfully kept, is the true safeguard of all that is left on earth of the primitive Paradise.

This commandment is also the safeguard of personal purity. "Chastity in heart, speech and behavior" is its strict requirement. Nor is this requirement too strict. Nothing less would sufficiently guard the sacred interests to which it relates. The personal purity which is true obedience to this commandment must sweeten all our conversation, all our songs, all our

thoughts, all our intercourse and all our solitude.

Watchfully, prayerfully, resolutely "*keep thyself pure*," and thou (whosoever thou art) shalt find this true obedience to God's commandment its own constant reward. It, more than everything else, assures health to the body and cheerfulness to the mind. It alone qualifies man and woman for that holy and pure union which is the true *hallowing of home*, in which earthly life is perfected and in which heaven *begins*.

### III.

#### FAMILY WORSHIP.

WHAT can be more beautifully appropriate than the worship of God in families?

Here is a little company of human beings, joined together in the most intimate connection, dwelling under one roof, fed at one table, supplied with the necessities of life from sources of income that are common to them all, feeling themselves to have altogether common interests, common wants and common exposures. It is granted that they all ought to worship God; is it not appropriate that they should worship him together? Each of them ought to thank God for his daily food, and daily to ask God for the needed supply. But the family take their food together. It is supplied from a common store and spread upon a common

table, and the daily gatherings around that table are the recognized symbol of their close intimacy. Is there any other scene which ought to be sanctified with prayer, if not that where a family most frequently look in each other's faces, where the responsible providers distribute the liberal provision, where parental love lavishes itself upon its tender objects, and where the children not only have their bodies nurtured, but their minds and manners cultivated?

A prayerless family meal is a most unchristian, a most ungodly, thing, and seldom does that graceless spirit whose name is *Fashion* show her impiety more plainly than when, at a social entertainment, she whispers that, as the family table would be too narrow for so numerous a company, so the family custom of giving thanks at table is too homely for so splendid an occasion—just as if the larger and costlier provision did not need the divine blessing, and did not call for thanks, as much as the ordinary meal, and just as if an unblest meal, partaken by a numerous company scattered through ample parlors, were any more

Christian than the same thing at an ordinary table!

Nor is it only at table that families should worship. Sheltered by one roof, the family have laid them down in peace and slept, and awoke in safety, because the Lord hath sustained them. Coming from their several chambers, they meet and exchange their affectionate salutations, glad to feel "We are all here." It is a common protection which they have shared. They have *together* been kept from the assassin, from the fire, from "the pestilence that walketh in darkness." Should not they kneel together and give thanks to their heavenly Guardian? They are going forth too to duties and to dangers, and they need a common guidance; shall they not ask for it together? And at the close of the day have they not equal reasons for united prayer and thanksgiving? They have all been led and kept by one Providence, and they all need to commit themselves to one divine Guardian.

There will be mornings when all have not come from their chambers in the glow

and the joy of health; there will be evenings when the family will sadly gather, returning from a new grave. Thenceforth, at the table and at the fireside, there will be "one vacant chair." All families must have these days of sorrow. What shall they do with this sorrow? To whom shall they tell it? On whose friendly strength shall they lay it? There is no such other place for a bereaved family to soothe and comfort themselves as at their family altar. Is it the father that is gone? They will best find comfort kneeling together and pouring out their prayers from their broken hearts through the channel perhaps of a feebler and softer voice than that to whose manly tones they were accustomed.

Or has one of the little ones been taken? The table must henceforth lack the light of his happy face—the house will no more ring with his merry laugh; but there is no sweeter memory, when you see the white hands laid together on the still breast, than that you had seen them folded on the edge of the table at the giving of thanks or on the chair by your side at the daily worship.



In joy and sorrow, amid all the varieties of domestic experience, they who live together may most appropriately and beneficially worship together.

It is of most wholesome religious effect for any family to listen daily together to the reading of some short portion of God's word—to hear each other's voices uniting in some sacred hymn or psalm, singing it to some tune that helps and deepens its salutary impression. There is no form of social worship the utility of which is better attested than family worship. It is like the nightly dews, which fall so silently and so little force themselves upon attention. We could perhaps better do without showers than without these. Occasional thunderstorms are no substitute for continual dews. As little can public religious services safely displace the daily practice of family worship. Do any busy Christians think they cannot afford the time for daily family prayer? You cannot afford to omit it. "Prayer and provender never hinder a man on a journey." The few minutes necessary can be devoted to family worship, before or after

the morning meal, in the busiest day, as well as the few minutes necessary to the meal itself. To omit the one for the saving of time is not less unwise than to omit the other.

The Christian who "will walk within his house with a perfect heart" (Ps. 101 : 2) should daily lead his household in a clear, audible expression of their desires and their thankful acknowledgments to God. It is worthy of careful study how this daily exercise may be made attractive, instructive and influential to children. Yet I would emphasize the assurance that the simple fact of a daily express acknowledgment of God, daily coming more than once into his presence with solemn recognition of it, is of itself steadily and powerfully influential in making the life of a family what it ought to be.

There should be in a home no day without family worship—no sitting down at the home table without express, thankful acknowledgment of God as the Giver of daily food and of all daily blessings. Nor is it of slight importance that all the family

should be present together, visibly uniting in this brief act of worship at the table. For any to loiter in chambers or passages until the blessing is over and the eating begun is bad, on the score of decorum—worse, as encouraging dilatory habits—worst of all, as a slight to God.

## IV.

### FAMILY GOVERNMENT.

THE opinion is not unfrequently expressed that family government and discipline are not so faithfully administered now as in the days of our fathers. I am not convinced that this is a just complaint. I am not apt to think that "the former days were better than these," and I find in Scripture a clear intimation that such a murmuring is neither new nor wise (Eccles. 7 : 10). Yet doubtless we may and ought to endeavor that the future days shall be better than these.

Omitting all comparison with the past, it is necessary to urge continually upon the young the obligation to reverence and obey their parents according to the fifth commandment, the commandment with promise, and to exhort parents to "bring up their

children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In order that any parent may be qualified for such responsibility he must be fixed in the steadfast purpose to lead an upright, conscientious, godly life at home. The attempt to enforce parental authority in opposition to parental example is an unnatural and absurd attempt. An eminent missionary tells of a Mohammedan who, having observed the obedient and lovely behavior of the missionary's children, went home, called all his own children together and gave them a severe flogging, declaring his intention to make them all behave "like that American's children." "But," said the candid Moslem afterward, "I found that useless. I learned that if I would have my children do right, I must do right myself."

Let any Christian parent who smiles at this story not neglect to ask whether, if he has never made that mistake so rudely, he may not have made it as really, and, considering the finer sensibilities which his children may have inherited, possibly not less hurtfully. Beware! Lead your children the right way; you cannot drive them

into it while you go another way. To have parental authority point one way, and parental example attract another way, is a miserable exhibition of folly. I am afraid that in various degrees this is not uncommon. Do not some children witness exhibitions of passion or of self-indulgence in parents who mourn that they cannot bring their children to practice the self-control or the self-denial which they recommend? Nothing is more fundamental to character than conscientious truthfulness, yet there are parents who make deception a frequent means for controlling little children. I would just as soon tell a woman that a piece of goods was silk which I knew to be cotton, or tell a man that a horse was sound which I knew to be spavined, or that a note or coin was good which I knew to be spurious, as to tell a little child that a medicine was sweet which I knew to be bitter, or try to influence his conduct by any promise or any threat which I did not expect and intend to fulfill. Not a few children are, in just such ways, taught by their own parents to lie. I do not affirm that there is more

of this in our own than in former days, but right sure am I that there is much more of it than there ever ought to be. Nothing is more important to children than to be able to rely upon the word of their parents with unquestioning confidence—to feel that their parents are incapable of any attempt to deceive.

I am uttering the veriest truism when I say that in nothing whatever should a parent's instruction to his children lack faithful exemplification in the conduct of the parent which the children witness. But one of the strangest delusions is, that parental conduct will not be accurately observed by children. Any wrong self-indulgence, any untruthfulness at home, however a parent may disguise it to himself, is not at all likely to be unnoticed by the children. Even if it is not distinctly seen by them, it will be felt, for it taints the moral atmosphere of the home.

## V.

### THE RELATION OF DOMESTIC VIRTUE TO PUBLIC VIRTUE.

**I**T seems often to be assumed that a man may be an exemplary patriot who is vicious in his private character. It would be more safe and more just to assume that a man who sets bad examples to his children at home is not a safe leader for a nation—that a man whose wife cannot safely trust him is not fit to be trusted by the people.

You remember how often and how strenuously Paul insisted upon wisdom and goodness demonstrated in home-life as necessary qualifications for offices in the Church: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" (1 Tim. 3 : 5).

The State is as really God's ordinance as the Church. Shall we, then, believe that a man of bad life at home is fit to direct public



life at the capital? The family, as God has constituted it, is the fundamental form of human society. A happy and virtuous commonwealth can possibly be made up only of happy and virtuous households. Home life is ever the source of public life. The stream can never flow higher than its fountains. Home virtue must ever be the basis of national virtue and the guarantee of national well-being.

There is a quite general impression that the domestic life of the present sovereign of England is without moral stain and is a worthy example to the households of Christendom. It is equally apparent that the present reign, already longer than David's or Solomon's, is unsurpassed in prosperity. The connection between these two facts cannot be stated with precision. I would not make any exaggerated statement. Much of England's temporal prosperity, her wealth and her power, has seemed to be successfully sought by methods that cannot be esteemed unselfish or just. What canker there may yet be found consuming such wealth, and what dry rot may be preparing

the power thus acquired to crumble, we must wait for the on-moving history to reveal. There are facts in that direction that may well make an Englishman "tremble for his country when he remembers that God is just." Nevertheless, the influence which has been emanating for all these many years from that happy royal home has seemed to be morally wholesome and favorable to whatever is pure and lovely and of good report. I am sure that the health and vigor and hope of that kingdom are better assured by the diffusion through its population of such virtuous sentiments and principles and affections than by all that can be won by arms or secured by prosperous business or wise diplomacy.

I hold the same hopes and the same fears for my own country. Assure me of temperance and purity and Sabbath-keeping and reverent, obedient study of God's holy word in the Presidential mansion and in the homes of Senators, Representatives, secretaries and judges, and I will have no fear of what will come to our country in the administration of its government. But if

the citizens show contempt for God's laws and institutions by entrusting the administration of government to men whose lives taint their own homes with moral leprosy, if purity and rectitude of home life are habitually voted not essential for public men, we are pitching our tents toward Sodom, and shall soon smell its brimstone.

## VI.

### GOD'S RELATION TO MOTHERS.

WHEN a true-hearted mother "feels for the first time her first-born's breath," she not only is conscious of her tender relation to that new-born creature, but feels a new tenderness and sacredness added to her relation to her husband. Dear as the babe is considered as her own, it is yet more precious inasmuch as it is his own. Closely and tenderly as she was united to him before, she feels the union to be more close and tender now. Yet more solemnly does the Christian mother find the experience of maternity giving a new preciousness and sacredness to her relation to God. She was his creature before; now she is also the mother of his creature. The great God, Author and Giver of life, has come very near to her. She has experienced in her own person the most marvelous exercise of his power. All levity touching this mar-

vel is profane. The Bible teaches us to regard it with the utmost reverence and solemnity (Ps. 139 : 14-17):

"I will praise thee ; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made :

Marvelous are thy works ; and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee,  
when I was made in secret,

And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect ;

And in thy book all my members were written,

Which in continuance were fashioned,

When as yet there was none of them.

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God !

How great is the sum of them !"

The birth of a child is a more wonderful event than the creation of a material world. God causes a new human life to begin in mysterious connection with the life of the mother. It is possible to receive such a gift with natural joy without duly regarding the

divine Giver. It is possible to feel the gush of this new fountain of affection without thoughtfully considering Him whose power has opened it. Perhaps it is possible for a woman to look upon her child, and to feel the pleasing emotions connected with the thought that it is her child and her husband's child, without remembering that it is a gift of God. It is not so with Christian mothers. They remember that God has come near to them in a wonderful manner, and by giving them a peculiar experience of his power has brought them into a new relation to himself. This relation is distinctly recognized in his word, and he has made it the subject of a special covenant. This covenant is indeed with both parents if they both are believers (Gal. 3 : 28, 29): "There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Let no believer in Christ doubt that the God of Abraham is pledged to be "a God to him and to his seed after him" (Gen. 17 : 7). But the mother who claims this promise

must make the same unreserved commitment of her child to God which she makes of herself. This, when you view God rightly, is your highest privilege. You commit your child to God as trustfully, as joyfully, as you lay it in the arms of its father. This may, by and by, involve your consent to a separation. He who gave may take your child to himself, or, letting you nurse and rear the child for him, may then show you that he "hath need of him" in some far-off land. There are many mothers who can testify that, keen as the pang of such parting is, it opens a new fountain of holy joy that flows on in a clear and steady stream of precious experience. When you have fully given to God, not only yourselves, but those dearer selves, your children; when you have learned to think of them as his, and to train them as his, and to love them as his, even as you always think of them as the children of him whom of all men you hold in highest esteem and love, —then will you know how sacred, how sanctifying and how heavenly God has designed and fitted the maternal relation to be.

## VII.

### CHRIST'S RELATION TO MOTHERS.

“**H**AIL, highly favored! blessed art thou among women.” The heart of every Christian man responds “Amen” to that angelic salutation. How much more tenderly the heart of every Christian woman!

It is well for mothers often to visit in imagination that Galilean cottage in which the child Jesus was brought up, growing “in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2 : 52).

You will not envy that favored mother, but your contemplation of her with her holy Child may help you to influence your own little ones to become like him. It will naturally induce that mood of gentle faithfulness which is best adapted to the right fulfillment of motherly duties. Returning from such visits to Nazareth, your whole air and manner will be characterized by all



that is most happily influential with children. If at any time you need power to influence aright a wayward boy and to soothe his turbulent spirit to gentleness, you are most likely to find yourself clothed with that power if he rushes into your presence when you have the New Testament in your hand, the reading of which has just taken you to Nazareth or to Bethlehem, and while you are hiding in your heart the precious things which Mary so carefully kept in hers (Luke 2 : 51). It will help you in all the perplexities and under all the burdens of maternal experience to reflect that the Lord Jesus humbled himself to be born of a human mother, to sleep on her breast, to be nurtured, protected, taught by her. Has not this hallowed human maternity?

How was human motherhood honored by the Son of Mary in the tender words in which he made provision for her in the midst of his dying agony! While the sword by which her holy Son was smitten for our offences was piercing through her soul she did not fail of receiving the sweetest possible consolation in the assurance that he re-

membered her, observed her, felt for her. Burdened with the sin of the world, nevertheless he had a special thought, a special care, a special word, for the mother who bore him.

All that was human in Jesus is imitable by your children. By his grace they may especially imitate his filial tenderness and dutifulness. In life and in death he may be their example.

No other scene in the life of our Lord is more beautiful than that of his taking little children in his arms. He cared no more for those little children than he cares now for yours. Do not allow yourself to think that only when they are grown, or grown much older than they are now, can your children be disciples of Jesus. Do they love you? Then cannot they love him? Are they sorry for having grieved or displeased you? Do they promptly leave off what they find grieving you? Then cannot they repent toward him? Are they made happy by your forgiveness? Then cannot they ask for his, and get it? As soon as they can confide in you, and trustfully and

submissively accept as best whatever you appoint for them, they can trust him and be submissive to him.

Yes, Christian mother, bring your *little* children to Christ. He bids you. He assures you that the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Matt. 19 : 14). Let nothing keep you from bringing them. "Forbid them not," he says. If those who preach the gospel ever seem to propose doctrines too difficult for children to understand, as if the intelligent reception of them were necessary to the saving reception of Christ, do not you believe it. We are doubtless too apt to fall into a technical and scholastic way of speaking upon religious subjects which forbids the reception of the gospel by little children. But we have no right to keep them away from him while they are learning long catechisms and difficult definitions. Let them come to him as soon as they can know him, and then go on learning of him from catechisms and hymns and Bible-verses and mothers' faces. They need only to know that they are sinful (let them call it "naughty," if they understand that better), and un-

happy on that account, and that Christ loves them and is able to make them good and happy. If you can teach them so much, and can secure by your prayers God's help to make them believe it, they may come to Christ. Nay, in so believing they have come to him and are embraced in the arms of his love.

Hold fast to Christ's words: "Forbid them not." Keep fast hold of the sweet assurance which those words convey. Let nothing discourage you ; let no man prevent you from bringing your children to Christ in humble prayer and leading them in his way by faithful instruction and discipline, expecting his effectual blessing thereon.

And oh, beware lest it should be yourselves who forbid them or prevent them from coming to him. It might be by your frivolity, your impatience, your heedlessness, your indulgence, your unholy example. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Let the little children come ; bring them.

## VIII.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE FAMILY.

**F**EW persons can hear thunder roll or the waves dash or the wind roar without thinking of God. You cannot stand alone below Niagara and gaze up at its awful flood, you cannot walk abroad in a clear night and look up at the numberless worlds and suns in the deep sky, without feeling that God is there.

Looking out of your window or walking through your garden, riding along by fields rich in verdure or yellow with ripening grain, do you not behold God's hand carrying on those beautiful silent processes as plainly as in ruling the ocean and the storm?

You are a mother. A little creature lies on your lap "whose pulse first caught its tiny stroke, whose blood its crimson hue, from your own." You watch its quiet

sleep ; you feel its soft breath ; you touch its dimpled hand ; you admire its graceful form, its perfect limbs, its delicate complexion. It wakes. It opens its deep eyes to yours. Its baby smile answers back to your look of love and yearning. Can you experience this and not recognize God, the Maker and Giver ? Could any wind or thunder be to you more solemnly the voice of God than the soft sound of your baby's breathing ?

When we speak of the Holy Spirit, we are apt to be thinking of pentecostal scenes, of "cloven tongues like as of fire," of overpowering divine manifestations. We think of large assemblies of people thrilled and moved by the word of God solemnly preached to them, many of them trembling and crying out, "What must we do to be saved ?" and soon brought to rejoice in the hope of salvation.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit, but this is not his only work. May not Christians in praying for the Holy Spirit have their minds too exclusively directed to such public displays of his power ? It is your

privilege to have the Holy Spirit dwell in your home and constantly help your endeavors to save the souls of your children.

*Your children need the Holy Spirit?* They have a contaminated, corrupted nature. The seeds of evil dispositions are in their minds, and will grow up to a sad and bitter harvest unless the Holy Spirit, by his renewing power, shall prevent. Your children have this evil nature from the first, and they show it very early, paining your hearts by their selfish ways. What will you do about it? What can you do? How will you keep the sweet babe on your lap from changing into a selfish, headstrong, wicked boy and growing up to be a hard, unprincipled, ungodly man? Sweet and innocent as that babe is, he has only to grow up and you know not what moral monster he may be. Ungodly and impenitent you may be sure that he will be unless the Holy Spirit changes his nature.

The children that have passed out of babyhood, and now own the toys about your house and fill your house with the sounds of their childish play,—how con-



stantly you need to watch them! How much anxiety you have for them! Can you change them? Without the Holy Spirit all your care, all your discipline, all your love, will not save them; they will grow up selfish, ungodly, impenitent.

*Your children can have the Holy Spirit.* If your prayer can procure this divine gift for yourselves, can it not for your children? Consider God's covenant with you in respect to your children and your Saviour's expressed regard for children, his welcome of them to his kingdom, and can you doubt that prayer in his name for the Holy Spirit will be as readily heard on behalf of them as of yourselves? Then let your daily prayer be for the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon your children. Let this prayer be in believing expectation of a favorable answer.

*The tokens of a favorable answer may not be altogether like those looked for in public places and in respect to mature minds.* Such views of truth as make a public assembly "weep and melt and tremble," a little child cannot take into its mind. The Holy Spirit will not work a miracle in order that it may.



But a little child—a *very* little one—may be made to feel that selfishness and petulance and disobedience are wicked; it may be made conscious of these evil tempers in itself, and ashamed and sorry for them; and it may become unselfish and slow to anger and obedient. Sometimes these effects are evidently produced in infant minds; and shall not “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, self-control” in a child be gratefully acknowledged as “the fruit of the Spirit”? These gracious effects should not be overlooked nor undervalued because they came not with startling suddenness, if they have come. Let them be gradual and gentle, and silent as the growth of the little ones’ bodies; only let them be evident, and they should be as readily acknowledged.

Beware of repelling your divine Helper. Be quick to observe all that may properly be ascribed to his influence upon your children’s minds, and cherish that sacred influence. “Quench not the Spirit.” Do not suppose that the Holy Spirit’s influence can be upon your child only when he is directly thinking of some religious lesson. Hope

rather, and pray for that gracious power to abide upon him continually, steadily improving his temper and his behavior. If your little son has sat by your side learning his Bible-lesson, and has given earnest attention while you explained it to him; if a look of solemnity gathered on his face while you enforced upon his conscience the duty which the lesson taught; if a tear stole down his cheek or a sob escaped from his breast or an honest resolve compressed his lips or spoke out in artless words of promise,—do not conclude that all this was seed sown by the wayside because in a few minutes afterward his merry voice comes to you from the playground, or because you look out of the window and see him scuffling with his mates, the merriest and most active of them all. Rather offer up a believing prayer that the Holy Spirit will be with him there, making him generous, courageous and truthful; that the Bible-lesson may there and then be faithfully applied and obeyed; that the playground may be the very scene upon which he will illustrate the beauty, the consistency and the regulating

power of Christian principle; that his behavior may be altogether such as becomes a Christian child—such behavior as Mary may have seen when looking out from the door of her home in Nazareth.

If at evening your little daughter has called you to her bedside and with tears and sobbing has confessed some fault to you, and begged you to pray that God will forgive her and make her good, and not let her be wicked and miserable for ever in hell, do not conclude that your prayer has not been fulfilled because in a few minutes she has fallen into a tranquil and sweet sleep. Believe rather that the peace of God, serene and beautiful as that healthy sleep, has fallen upon her spirit and shall bless her waking—sweet token that her sins are forgiven and happy fruit of the Holy Spirit's inworking.

If such scenes of tenderness are wanting, yet if you are permitted to see the thoughtful dutifulness, the love of simple prayer, the interested attention to the word of God and to parental instruction, and conscientious endeavor to be obedient to both, with

gradually increasing willingness to forego selfish indulgences for the sake of others and for the sake of duty, do not doubt that this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

*The work of the Holy Spirit is to be in connection with your instruction and discipline.* He aids your endeavors and makes them successful. The sun and rain are not to supersede the human culture, but to make it effectual. Then pray not only, but study to increase your skill and to improve your methods. Counsel with other mothers, with your husband, with your pastor; read instructive books. Study your children, their tempers, their liabilities, their exposures, their besetting sins, the means and motives by which they can be most healthfully influenced. Study in their daily lives the illustration of Bible truths. Such study, quickened by maternal love and guided by prayer, will be the most effectual to continual increase of maternal wisdom.

*You need the Holy Spirit putting forth his gracious power upon your own soul.* Without that you will not have the needed patience and meekness and wisdom and

love. Natural affection is not enough, and is not reliable. Instinctive maternal fondness is beautiful, even in birds and beasts. But that may do nothing for the soul of a child but to pet it and spoil it and ruin it by stimulating the development of selfish and unholy impulses. You need for your holy work of rearing a child for heaven a love that is not earthly, that is not an instinct—a love that is heavenly, pure, Christ-like. Such love is “the fruit of the Spirit.” Seek the Holy Spirit’s help for yourself. Let your ideas of the help which you need be definite, made so by reflection. Seek the very help which you need, simply, earnestly, expectantly. “Seek, and ye shall find.”

Be not soon wearied. Never be discouraged. “Learn to labor and to wait.” I am not proposing to you to be satisfied while you do not see evidence of your children’s piety, nor carelessly to think, “They will be well enough by and by.” Far from it. Never cease your watchfulness. But, having done all you can, then commit all to God trustfully and cheerfully. Do not

worry. Wait, not in indolence, but wait in faith and prayer, for God to work.

*Seek his influence on you to make you what you wish your children to be.* He can do it. You cannot be too deeply impressed with the thought that the Holy Spirit will bless your children, if at all, in connection with yourself. Then be careful of yourself. Keep yourself pure ; keep yourself patient ; keep yourself calm, meek, gentle ; keep yourself (God help you to do so !) in the state in which you wish your children to be.

You cannot have failed to observe that marvel of your physical being whereby anything in the least degree noxious in your diet imparts its harmful influence to the natural food of your babe, and soon shows its effect upon its delicate system. Not less susceptible are your children's souls, and no less certainly do they imbibe an evil influence from whatever unfavorably affects your own soul. Then keep your soul in a wholesome state. Guard yourself from all evil tempers for your children's sake. Try to be, pray to be, in



behavior and in spirit, all that you wish them to be. It is likely that they will be mainly what you are.

I know how heavily this thought may oppress you. Cast the burden of it on the Lord. Take comfort and courage from his offer of help. He can fit you for the work to which he calls you. He will if you truly desire him to do so. What else can he be more willing to do for you?

Is there already a little grave on which you have laid white blossoms and dropped motherly tears?

“There is no fold, however watched and tended,  
But one dead lamb is there;  
There is no fireside, howsoe’er defended,  
But has one vacant chair.”

That little one, taken from the cradle in your home, is “safe in the arms of Jesus.” Your sighs for it are not sighs of anxiety. The pain of that separation the Comforter, dwelling with you, will soothe and heal. Do not think that he cares more for that child gathered into eternal safety than for those left with you amid these earthly exposures. Do not think the Holy Spirit more ready

to comfort you in that sorrow than to strengthen you for this work and steady you in this care and help and cheer you in these solitudes. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14: 17). Recognize him. Trust his present help. Believe assuredly that the Holy Spirit is willing to abide in your home, hallowing all its scenes and all its experiences, and preparing you and your family by and by to dwell together in a "house not made with hands" "as children dwell at home."



## IX.

### THE SALVATION OF INFANTS.

**I**T is not of those who die in infancy that I speak. I speak of the salvation of infants who do not die in infancy. I speak of salvation from sin beginning in infancy, progressing through childhood and manhood, and consummated in the lifelong believer's abundant entrance into heavenly glory. I speak not of those infants that are taken away from the arms and the care of parents, and for whose nurture and training not their parents are responsible, but perhaps their angels, which do always behold the face of the divine Father. I speak of those infants that are to be nurtured and reared and disciplined in these earthly homes, within the embraces of this human care and prayer.

My question is, May these infants be saved? May they be saved *as* infants,

saved while yet they are infants, saved *now*—so saved now that, growing up here, developing into full and unquestionable voluntariness and moral responsibility here, going forth from these homes into schools, into active business, into adult life, they will *all their lives* be Christians, saints, saved persons?

1. An affirmative answer to this question involves no theoretical difficulties which do not equally belong to the affirmation that those dying in infancy are saved.

All who regard infants dying in infancy as needing any *saving* at all ascribe their salvation to the redeeming Christ and the regenerating Holy Spirit. It is pertinent, then, to ask what is there which these divine Persons, this divine Saviour, does for a dying infant which he may not as easily and as legitimately do for an infant which is to live on here for threescore or fourscore years? What theological or metaphysical difficulty troubles you here which is not equally in your way there? What Scripture promise gives you comfort and hope there which is not also available here?

2. There are Christian experiences the genuineness and validity of which the most judicious observers acknowledge, the beginning of which cannot be marked in the consciousness of the subjects nor in the observation of their friends or guardians. In other words, there are true Christians, credibly manifesting themselves as such, giving all the recognized evidences of a true religious experience, producing in their godly lives all the fruits of the Spirit, as the inspired Scriptures describe them, maintaining and adorning a Christian profession, in whom this experience has not begun within their conscious remembrance. They have no memory of a time when they did not love God and loathe sin and trust Christ and try to obey him as heartily as they do now.

It is commonly admitted that there are some such cases, but it is also commonly assumed that they are exceptional cases and rare. My own conviction is that they are numerous, and that they deserve more ready and thankful recognition than they customarily receive.

3. There are persons in considerable numbers in our evangelical congregations whose lives are such as would not discredit a Christian profession, in all respects in which their lives are subject to human observation, who do not make such a profession, and who dare not, because they have had no experience of a sudden and decisive change in the state of their minds—nothing which seems to them fit to be described as a change of heart or a new birth.

I am not speaking of self-righteous persons, who haughtily reject the scriptural view of human sinfulness—who do not feel the need of the Physician because they count themselves *whole*. I am not speaking of those who see nothing in Christianity but a moral code, and count themselves good enough Christians, or something better than Christians, because they pay cash, one hundred cents to the dollar, and do not get drunk nor let a neighbor starve to death. I am speaking of men and women who listen attentively and reverently to the gospel; whose solemn faces in their pews and whose frank, thoughtful words when we talk with

them attest the sincerity with which they accept our evangelical preaching ; who have and avow a deep and tender sense of their own sinfulness ; who do not at all doubt the sufficiency of Christ's atonement nor his ability and willingness to save them, but do painfully doubt whether what they are conscious of amounts to true evangelical faith. They do not feel sure that they are regenerate, mainly because they have no remembrance of any such change consciously taking place in them as they understand regeneration to be, although quite evidently they are in the habitual exercise of that disposition which belongs to the regenerate mind.

When such persons die, not only do their wives and children hope that they are saved, but very often their pastors and their most thoughtful and orthodox neighbors cherish this hope for them. This hope justifies itself by divers sorts of special pleading. Most commonly, I think, it assumes that such persons have lived all their lives very near to the kingdom of heaven, and have

by God's effectual grace been brought quite into it shortly before their death.

Let me again guard myself against possible misapprehension. I am not speaking of those sad cases in which the fondness of friends accepts as evidence of regeneration some expression of willingness to die from one whose life has been profligate or carelessly worldly—a willingness to die which may be only stolid indifference to life induced by opiates or by disease. I am not referring to cases of that kind at all. I am speaking of those thoughtful, reverent, conscientious persons who never dared count themselves Christians, never felt “good enough to join the Church,” and who lie on deathbeds, not joyful, not triumphant, not positively hopeful, not even now daring to claim Christ's promises as ensuring *their* safety, yet glorifying him by most distinct testimony to the fullness and sufficiency of his provision and offers. They take all the blame on themselves if they do perish, and in that submissive acquiescence in God's holy sovereignty and satisfaction with God's perfect character they rest in a serenity

which they cannot explain: they are afraid that it is stupor. They enjoy no other sound so much as the voice of prayer, no other visits so much as those of the pastor, whose personal ministrations their minds associate with all that is Christian. They give up the receding world without a murmur; they turn from every unscriptural scheme with disgust; and if they dare not lay hold on Christ with confident hope, they shrink with unutterable pain from any suggestion of abandoning him or looking to any other Saviour. They at last fold their arms and close their eyes to die, plainly consenting to let Christ decide whether he can count them as his own or must say "I never knew you," and they have no thought of blaming him or hating him if he shall thus send them away into hopelessness.

You cannot think that he does that; you know him too well to think so. Though the names of these despondent ones are not on your roll of communicants, you believe that they are in the Lamb's book of life. You can hardly help avowing this hope more or less distinctly at their funerals, and it com-



forts you when you write down their names in your funeral register, and when you look down from your pulpit upon the black bonnets in the pews they used to sit in.

Whether is it easier to believe that these persons have been all their lives impenitent, and have been born of God just as they were dying, or that they were renewed in their infancy and have been true disciples of Christ longer than they can remember—as long as they have been capable of loving and trusting him?

If this last is the truth, it is a great pity that such people cannot have the comfort of Christian hope during their lives. It is a great pity that the Church of Christ cannot have the additional strength and influence which their membership in full communion would add to her. It is a great pity that the communities in which they live cannot have the testimony which they ought to have their mouths opened to give. It is wrong that Christ does not have the credit among men of the salvation which he really has wrought in those souls. Might not all these comforts and benefits be secured by



a more frank and ready recognition of infant regeneration as a fact?

If these views are just, they have important practical application to our pastoral care of children and to our parental care of children, for these two should blend with and interpenetrate each other. There is recently a great awakening of the ministry and the Church to the work of religious instruction of children. Much is said of the importance of seeking by prayer and by all scriptural means the early conversion of children. This is right; this is of unspeakable importance. Religious instruction which only increases the intelligence of the young without touching their hearts, which makes them expert theologians and leaves them impenitent, is not only defective, but positively harmful. It is likely to be ruinous, fatally hardening. We cannot be too solemnly and prayerfully in earnest to secure the conversion of every impenitent child. It cannot be secured too soon. The danger that it will never be secured may justly be regarded as increasing, in more than arithmetical ratio, with every week of delay.

But is it right to assume that every child is impenitent that has not been *converted*? May not regeneration be experienced so early that there need be, and can be, no *conversion*? May not the renewing power of the Holy Spirit come upon the soul at the very point where moral responsibility begins, at the initial point of its spiritual history, preventing it from entering upon a career of impenitence?

Have not we been doing the Lord's work too mechanically and too clumsily, assuming that children, even the children of prayerful believers, must live some years, few or many, in an unregenerate state; must pass some portion of their lives in actual and positive impenitence; must attain some degree of intellectual development and some amount of intelligence in impenitence; must become conscious of impenitence, of a love of sin and of some more or less strenuous opposition to God; must be brought consciously to yield up that opposition; must, in short, be *converted*—i. e. *turned* from impenitence to piety, from sin to holiness, from the world and the devil to God? Too com-

monly I believe it has been assumed that our children must go through some such experience, and be able to give some clear account of it, before they can have a right to sit at Christ's table or to hope in his mercy or be happy in his love. I believe that frequently this unscriptural assumption, if it has not broken the bruised reed, has kept it bruised and weak, has dwarfed and distorted its growth—if it has not quenched the smoking flax, has kept it long smoking, when the true, scriptural view would have kindled the infant piety into a beautiful flame, lighting up our homes with such sweet brightness as is nowhere else to be enjoyed outside of that city of which the Lord God and the Lamb are the light.

It is not true that all our children need to be *converted*, in the proper and strict sense of that word. There are children in some Christian homes who never were *impenitent* sinners; who never were in a state of enmity or opposition to God; who never did set their wills in disobedience either directly against God or against his deputies in the home, their parents. This is not because

they have not inherited a depraved nature, but because, in answer to parental prayers, habitually and believingly offered, the renewing grace of God was vouchsafed to them at that earliest moment when without it they would have begun a life of sin.

Let us open our eyes and look whether God has not granted us this in more instances than we reckon in our Sunday-school classes and in our homes. I suspect that we have near us, with us, little true disciples of Jesus who dare not declare themselves such because virtually we have taught them that they cannot be such without consciously giving up what consciously they never had and abandoning what they never adhered to.

Nor is it only children in our Sabbath-schools, not only those who can read, not only those who can commit Bible-verses to memory, not only those who can climb up into our laps and kiss us, who are interested in our holding the truth on this subject. It concerns those children who are not yet out of their cradles. It concerns those children who are not yet in their

cradles. If there is such an atmosphere of hope and of prayer and of scriptural expectation in which children may be begotten and into which they may be born, in Christ's name let us give it to them, as we only can, by believing this truth and taking it into our hearts and prayers and lives.

## X.

### INFANT CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.

THE Westminster Confession of Faith defines the visible Church as “consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children.” The Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church declares that “a particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together for divine worship and godly living agreeably to the Holy Scriptures; and submitting to a certain form of government.”

Shall we, then, call the children of professing Christians members of the visible Church catholic and members of the particular church with which their parents are in covenant? The different answers to this question which are given by those who accept the Westminster Confession probably

arise from different definitions of the word "members." Perhaps the hesitation of some to answer that question at all may arise from the want of a clear definition of that word in their own minds.

In general, it will be admitted that all the persons of whom any society *consists* are members of it. In a large part of the societies with which we are conversant all members are equal in rights and privileges of membership. To affirm that any one is a member of such a society implies that he is entitled to all the rights and privileges to which any other member is entitled.

If this is so understood by any in respect to membership in the Church, they may well hesitate or refuse to affirm the membership of infants. But this is not true of all societies. Voluntary associations may have corporate membership investing the persons holding it with privileges and powers of the highest grade, and honorary membership to which a lower grade of powers and privileges belongs. There may also be probationary membership, which will, after a time, be developed into



full and complete membership by simple fidelity to its prescribed conditions. In societies which are natural and not voluntary, into which persons come by birth and not by their own choice, different grades of membership are quite necessary. Thus every native of a civil commonwealth is a member of that commonwealth from his birth, entitled to some privileges, protections, rights, while there are others to which he will not be entitled until he arrives at maturity ; and there may be rights and privileges to which he can become entitled only by giving proof of mental and moral qualifications fitting him for the safe and useful exercise of them. Thus some of the States wisely require their youth to make some faithful use of the privileges of education which the States provide, before they shall have part in choosing the rulers of the State through the elective franchise. They require, for example, that no citizen shall vote until he can read and write. The boy is a citizen, a member of the commonwealth, but he becomes entitled to the higher powers and prerogatives of citizenship by attaining



the age and showing himself possessed of the intelligence and virtue (or true manhood) prescribed by its laws.

In the family every child is born a member of the family, but he can never be, in that family, other than a subject member, under the authority of his parents. When mature he may found another family, and, so doing, must be its responsible head.

The Westminster definition of the visible Church cannot fairly be interpreted as giving to children, as such, any other than a subordinate membership, analogous, in many respects, to their membership in the family and in the State, into which they are born. Yet this is a real membership. These children are truly members of the visible Church catholic and of the particular visible church to which their parents belong. In no other terms can their actual relation to the Church be so correctly stated. They are members entitled to the rights and subject to the responsibilities of membership for which they are competent, including the right to become competent for them all, including the right to all the help which the Church and

their parents can give them to attain such competency, and including responsibility to the parents, to the Church and to God for faithful improvement of all such helps and all such opportunities.

How shall we define the church-membership which we thus affirm for the children of professing Christians? What are its limitations? And what are its positive elements?

*They are not members "in full communion."* This convenient phrase correctly sets forth the distinction which we need. A member in full communion is a member entitled to all the privileges and rights which membership can include. A member not in full communion is a member entitled to some, not to all, of such privileges.

Infant church-members, as such, *are not entitled to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.* Worthy partaking of this ordinance implies intelligence and faith. It is the personal act of the participant. He must be able to "discern the Lord's body." He is scripturally required to "examine himself," and so to be reasonably assured that he is acting

intelligently and under the influence of suitable and right motives. When capable of doing this, and actually doing this, he partakes of the bread and the cup, not as the child of a believer, but as a believer,—not as the child of parents “who profess the true religion,” but as a person who now for himself professes the true religion.

Infant church-members *are entitled to baptism*. We may with equal propriety say that their parents are entitled to the privilege of having them baptized. The right is primarily in the parent, but it is in the parent for the child. It is the child's birth-right. It is the right of the child because he is the child of that parent under that covenant. The baptism of the child on the parent's profession of faith is to the child, as well as to the parent, “a holy sign and seal of the covenant of grace.” It seals the child as a child of the covenant. It publicly binds the parent to rear it as a child of the covenant. It pledges the Church to watch over the child, to pray for it, to provide suitable church privileges and education for it, to hold the child within the

circle of her own holy influences and guardianship, and to endeavor to bring it at length, by God's grace, into her full communion.

This right to baptism, and to all which baptism solemnly pledges, is the child's birthright in the Church catholic, and is properly and responsibly guaranteed by the particular church having access to it. The right to baptism as a form, outward upon the flesh, is not worth defending. The right to that which baptism signifies and seals is unspeakably precious and sacred. For the clear vindication of infant baptism, and that it may be filled with worthy significance, we need to hold to the reality of infant regeneration as set forth in preceding pages of this volume. It is not that baptism *is* regeneration, nor that it of its own force effects or secures regeneration, but that it *signifies* the regeneration of the child, as well as the parent's surrender and consecration of the child to God and pledge to rear and train the child for God.

This ceremonial recognition of the child's actual membership in the visible Church should express the parent's humble, prayer-

ful hope of the child's membership in the Church invisible—the hope that from the very beginning of its life as a responsible creature it is renewed by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit—is truly regenerate. This precious hope is not to be held cheaply and carelessly, but solemnly and watchfully and prayerfully. It is not to supersede, but to encourage and sweeten and vivify, the parental nurture and prayer. It should never be given up until the growing or grown child shall show his impenitence by ungodly behavior. Such a hopeful presumption of infant regeneration, and consequent infant piety, mildly and quietly developing without any period of conscious opposition to God from which there must be a turning or conversion, is needed for the satisfactory interpretation of our Church's rule, that “when children come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, and appear to be sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper.”

This is not to be interpreted as if only intelligence and morality were required as qualifications for full communion. Applicants are to be "examined as to their knowledge and piety." But the Directory does assume that there may be piety from very infancy, from a time back of which not only has the child no remembrance, but the parents have no knowledge or evidence of his state. Such a child should not be required to give evidence of conversion, but of present piety—present, actual Christian character. He must credibly declare that he now believes on the Lord Jesus. It is not necessary that he should be able to remember a time when he did not believe on him. He should be humbly conscious that he now loves God and hates sin. It is by no means necessary nor desirable that he should be able to remember a time when he did not hate sin and love God.

Our Church's rule for the admission of children born within the pale of the Church to the Lord's Supper is evidently framed upon the hopeful presumption that children of believers faithful to God's covenant and



ordinances are regenerate. If, unhappily, any of them are not so, this is likely to be made evident by some "scandal," some conduct other than "sober and steady," or at any rate by avowals or manifestations of feeling inconsistent with piety. Such evidence that the baptized child has not the spirit of a Christian after he has attained sufficient knowledge to understand the Christian doctrines and the import of the sacraments, forbids his admission to full communion. Until he shall be converted he may not be invited to the Lord's table. Infant membership in the Church does not develop into membership in full communion without credible evidence of true piety.

## XI.

### TERMINATION OF INFANT CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.

WHEN and how does infant church-membership cease?

1. Whenever the child is admitted to membership in full communion on his own credible profession of his personal faith his infant church-membership, as such, ceases. That is to say, the imperfect membership into which he was born, to which some but not all church privileges and responsibilities belong, ceases whenever the person emerges from it into the complete membership which invests him with all church privileges and responsibilities. After this he is no longer a member of the Church in virtue of his relation to his parents, but in the same full sense in which his parents are members. He is no longer a member of the Church in his parents, but with his parents, their fellow-member. Father and son are now



brothers, mother and daughter are now sisters, in Christ and in his Church, equal in rights and privileges and in direct responsibility to the Church authorities.

2. If the child does not become qualified for full communion, the question when and how his infant church-membership shall cease is not definitely answered by the Presbyterian standards. They do not even affirm that it shall cease at all. It may, however, be said that infant church-membership ceases virtually and practically when infancy ceases. When the child is no longer under the control and instruction of his parents, he no longer has a title to church-membership in or through them. His individuality has reached its full development. He must henceforth give account of himself to the Church and to God. His responsibility for his own personal standing in the Church and before God is complete. In the sense in which the Westminster Confession uses the expression he is no longer the child of parents professing the true religion, for he is no longer a child. He no longer has parents who are responsible for the di-

rection of his life. He has outgrown the filial relation in that sense of it. Parental responsibility and filial dependence have ceased.

Shall we then say that the adult son or daughter of Christian parents, who was baptized in infancy, but who has never become prepared to profess a personal faith in Christ, is no longer a member of the visible Church? This seems to be true. Shall there then be, at any determinate time, an official or formal proclamation or authoritative declaration to that effect? It would certainly be difficult to tell precisely at what time this should be, and equally difficult to tell of what practical use it would be at any time.

Some rigid ecclesiastical theorist might insist upon this in order to theoretical completeness and consistency of church polity, but the practical pastor or elder, tenderly and watchfully caring for souls, would ask such a theorist what good it would do to achieve such theoretical accuracy. Who or what is harmed by the lack of it? If adult persons who were children of believers in covenant with the Church, and who in in-

fancy received the seal of the covenant, are still attentive to our preaching and hold themselves respectfully and kindly subject to our pastoral care, though not enjoying a hope in Christ, is the Church called upon to pass any act of excommunication upon them? Nay, verily, she vindicates her own purity by not admitting them to full communion. It may be their own conscientious respect for her teaching which prevents them from assuming a privilege for which they feel themselves unqualified. Her motherly love and fidelity demand that she shall still prayerfully watch and wait for God's saving work in their souls so evidencing itself to their own hearts, and so visibly manifest in their lives, that they may properly be welcomed to the Lord's table and enrolled as members of his Church in full communion or (as we customarily express it more shortly) "communicants."

This is admirably expressed by Jonathan Edwards in his *Reply to Williams*, as follows:

"They are not cast out because it is a matter held in suspense, whether they do

cordially consent to the covenant or not, or whether their making no such profession does not arise from some other cause. And none are to be excommunicated without some positive evidence against them. And therefore they are left in the state they were in in their infancy, not admitted actually to partake of the Lord's Supper (which actual participation is a new positive privilege) for want of a profession, or some evidence beyond what is merely negative, to make it visible that they do consent to the covenant. For it is reasonable to expect some appearance more than what is negative of a proper qualification, in order to being admitted to a privilege beyond what they have hitherto actually received. A negative charity may be sufficient for a negative privilege, such as freedom from censure and punishment; but something more than a negative charity is needful to actual admission to a new privilege."

3. Viewing the matter in another aspect, it may be said that certainly the membership of children in the visible Church must cease when it becomes evident by their wicked conduct that they are not members of the

Church invisible or spiritual. When flagrant vice or impenitent perverseness or dissoluteness has wholly overborne all hopeful presumption of their having been spiritually regenerated, ought the Church to cast them out by an official act of excommunication? To do so might not violate any theoretical principle; the rigid fulfillment of a correct theory may seem to call for this; but again the considerate pastor will ask, "Of what use would such an act be? Who would be benefited or helped by it? What interest of the Church or of Christ is harmed or imperiled by omitting it? All the ends of church discipline in such cases are more securely gained by simply not admitting such unworthy children of the Church to the full communion for which they are visibly unfit.

The difficulty at this end of the subject is only theoretical. There is no difficulty and no embarrassment in practice. The practical evil is at the other end. We practically nullify important means of grace for the Lord's little ones by our failure to recognize infant regeneration and infant church-membership.

## XII.

### LITTLE COMMUNICANTS.

WHEN shall Christian children be admitted to full communion in the Church?

1. At what age? The Presbyterian Directory (chap. ix.) says, "when they come to years of discretion." It is judiciously added, "The years of discretion, in young Christians, cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the eldership." The Church does not prescribe an age at which infant membership shall mature into membership in full communion, as the State fixes twenty-one years for the maturity of citizenship. She makes it depend on mental and spiritual qualifications ("knowledge and piety"), to be judged of by her ordained "officers." Is there not, in fact, great timidity and reluctance in admitting children to the communion, what-

ever may be the evidences of piety which they give? Virtually, do not many elders and ministers require that applicants for admission to communion shall be of such age and stature that one would not naturally call them children, but youths, young men or young women? This is not warranted by the phrase "years of discretion," for this phrase is to be interpreted with reference to the subject-matter to which it is applied. Years of discretion sufficient for holding office in the Church, for teaching a Sabbath-school class, for conducting a prayer-meeting, or even for taking audible part in it, and years of discretion sufficient for worthily partaking of the Lord's Supper, may not be the same. We shall have made some progress in our inquiry when we have decisively dropped out of our estimate all thought of twenty-one years or fourteen years, or any number of years whatever, as determining anything in this matter.

2. What amount of knowledge shall be required? "Sufficient knowledge *to discern the Lord's body*," says our Directory. How shall we understand this? Must the young



communicant be able to expound the principle on which Christ's expiation can be accepted by the God of justice like ancient Anselm or modern Barnes or Hodge? Is it necessary that he should have read those venerable treatises, or be able to understand them if read to him? By no means. No one holds that young communicants must be educated theologians. What must they *know*? How much must they *understand*?

If a little child has heard in the old cradle-song,

“ ’Twas to save thee, child, from dying,  
Save my dear from burning flame,  
Bitter groans and endless crying,  
That thy blest Redeemer came ;”

if he understands that that blest Redeemer is the Son of God, the Lord of glory, who “became a child like him,” and, when grown to manhood, died for our sins; if such a little child knows and confesses that he himself is a sinner, and with sincere sorrow for that fact asks the Lord Jesus to save him, and believes that he does save him; if he knows that the bread and the cup mean the flesh and the blood of Jesus, and that



eating and drinking them signify taking and trusting him as our Saviour from sin,—has not that child “knowledge sufficient to discern the Lord’s body”? Does this phrase mean any more than that? Whatever more may be desirable for the satisfaction of a maturing intellect, is it not simply that (which the little child can receive as well) on which the soul of the most mature and of the dying believer rests in secure hope?

3. What evidences of “*piety*” shall be demanded in the child communicant? Must the little one be free from faults of conduct or of temper? Why more than an adult communicant? Certainly, in both adults and children humble and penitent acknowledgment of faults, and prayerful effort to be rid of them, must be evidenced, or they cannot come worthily to this table. With such penitence and such trust who dares forbid any one? But how shall the pastor and elders have evidence of these?

We are speaking of children who are “within the pale of the Church”—children of believing parents, children in Christian homes, children of the covenant. Cannot

such parents, carefully and prayerfully bringing up those children "in the nurture of the Lord," give reliable testimony concerning their habits and behavior and the spirit therein manifested? Is not almost every such child in some Sunday-school class, and cannot the teacher learn the child's thoughts and feelings? Has not the pastor access to all those classes and all those homes? And has not he the Good Shepherd's word to Simon ever sounding in his heart: "Feed my lambs"? Is it really more difficult for the pastor and elders to ascertain whether a child is a penitent believer than whether an adult is? And is not this all that needs to be ascertained—that he is *a penitent believer*, not that he is *a faultless person*?

4. Shall we, in all cases, wait for children to come to us with the request to be admitted to communion? The most modest and the most tenderly penitent might not dare to do this. The disposition to be led, not to go forward boldly, sweetly becomes Christian childhood. Our Directory assumes this where it says that such children as have

been described "ought to be informed it is their duty, and their privilege, to come to the Lord's Supper." Who should inform them? Surely if parents and pastor and elders and Sunday school teachers are duly thoughtful and watchful, they will prayerfully consult together, and will find the most suitable way in each case of leading the little disciple to a consciousness of his state and a modest recognition of his privilege. Ought not this, more than it is, to be a matter of watchful consideration and of frank consultation on the part of all these official guardians and nourishers of infant piety?

These visible, tangible tokens, these emblems which our eyes look upon and our hands handle and our lips touch, are more helpful, more needful, to the young than to the mature. Children are more dependent on sensible tokens than mature men for vivid impression and distinct remembrance. The child wants something which he can keep "to remember you by" when you go away from him. The Lord gave us these tokens for just that, "to remember him by." "This do in remembrance of me."

The solemn self-examination in preparation for the sacrament, the calling to remembrance of faults and sins and asking forgiveness for them, the renewal of vows and the earnest prayer for help to keep them, the distinct mental beholding of Christ crucified, the tender thoughts of him in the impressive silence while the bread and the cup are passed through the congregation of communicants, the fixing and completing of all these impressions by the reverent touch and taste of the elements,—all are helps to right endeavor to keep the steps onward in the narrow path; and these helps are more needful to children than to men.

I think that this will be read by some who have come first to the Lord's table later in life, but not as hoping that they had just then found the Saviour. You had feebly hoped in him for years, but did not have courage openly to confess him by this act of obedience to his dying request. You have lost much by this delay—much of enjoyment and much of strengthening. Do not you feel this to be so? Then testify

thus, I pray you, to your pastor and brethren, and entreat them to look after the little disciples.

When the church is doing so much to instruct the children, so much to secure that they shall early know all the elementary truths of the gospel, shall she not expect the divine Spirit to make her teaching early effectual? And shall she sternly or thoughtlessly shut away from the table of Christian communion the little ones in whose hearts Christian faith and love are implanted? In every Church which Christ blesses with true spiritual motherhood will there not be little communicants? If anywhere on earth now, is it not at his own table that we may hear our Lord's gentle voice saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not"?

### XIII.

#### THE BEGINNING OF LOVE.

A LITTLE girl being asked when she began to love God, answered, "When I began to love my mother." There is no reason to doubt that parents who love their children "in the Lord," and hold them believingly in his faithful covenant, may obtain for them his renewing grace so early that they will no more remember the beginning of their love to him than the beginning of their love to their mothers. Such children's love and obedience to parents will be "in the Lord." Their piety in its beginnings will be gentle, trustful, sweetly filial. It need not, therefore, in its maturity be less strong and steadfast and courageous.

But there are mature persons, serious and thoughtful and conscientious, in whom love to God as a conscious experience has not

yet begun—needs yet to begin. How shall it?

I was once conversing with a parishioner, a married lady, whose perplexity respecting her love to God led me to ask her if she could tell me at what moment her love to her husband began. She promptly and beautifully answered, "I should say at the moment when first I became aware that he loved me." Doubtless many a happy wife can say that most heartily. Yet some, as happy as any, could not tell at what moment nor on what day that knowledge came to them. It came with full assurance to their hearts, not by a sudden and spoken avowal.

Not to all souls alike—not to all alike suddenly—does the assurance come that God loves them. But whenever it does come, when sinful unbelief so far breaks away from about the beclouded soul that it *knows* God's love to it, says with itself, "God so loved me that he gave his only-begotten Son for my redemption,"—as soon as a soul thus knows itself loved of God, then it loves him.



Practically, it is not wise nor profitable to try directly to make ourselves love God. No woman begins to love a man by resolving, "I will love him." Our effort should be to understand and know God's love to us.



## XIV.

### THE HONOR DUE TO WEAKNESS.

PETER'S exhortation to husbands so to dwell with their wives as to render honor to them "as the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. 3 : 7) seems to me the most nobly chivalrous utterance which I ever heard or read. All that historic chivalry has worthily aimed at would find its consummation in such recognition of the honor that is due to weakness.

What kind of weakness is that to which it is possible for right manly strength to give honor? Surely it is not any sort of weakness that is akin to worthlessness. The weakness of frivolity or of silliness cannot be honored. It may be our duty to bear with it, but I do not see how we can honor it. Perhaps it will help us if we notice a little more particularly the figurative form in which Peter gives us his

thought: "the weaker *vessel*." By a *vessel* we mean "a utensil proper for holding something." "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor" (2 Tim. 2 : 20). Now, among the many vessels in a great house, which are they that are treated with the most honor, touched the most gently, handled the most carefully? These questions make you think of your glass and your porcelain. They make you think of vessels on your table through which the daylight shines freely, making them glitter like jewels. They make you think of costly vases which you commission to hold the choicest summer flowers, or vials which imprison and keep for you the most delicious perfumes. Of all the vessels in your house, these upon which you bestow the most abundant honor are the same which could be most easily broken—which can least bear hard pressure or rough usage. Their weakness comes of their fineness, and their fineness makes them worth all the care which their weakness needs. Such weakness can

be honored; such weakness is honored. So is it that every true husband honors his wife. So is it that every true man honors every true woman. And this is Christian chivalry, the consummate flower of Christian civilization.

But I do not think that we have yet reached the utmost meaning of Peter's beautiful exhortation. There has been a disposition in men to use that figure of speech as if it represented their wives to be *their* vessels—choice and goodly vessels indeed, "vessels unto honor," to adorn and beautify their homes as well as to furnish forth the highest and noblest utilities; but *theirs*, they being the owners. A careful study of Peter's figurative expression shows that he rather conceives of both the husband and wife as vessels, the wife the finer, and therefore the weaker or more frangible, of the two. His phrase would be more exactly rendered, "giving honor unto the feminine vessel as the weaker." The Christian man and woman dwelling together in happy and holy union, "as heirs together of the grace of life," are to conceive of themselves

as a pair of vessels "sanctified and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2 : 21). And Peter bids us reverently recognize the natural difference between these two *vessels*. The coarser, harder, stronger should accept the rougher and harder uses, and the finer and frailer should be honored with the gentler and finer and sweeter uses.

Can human thought carry the refinement of genuine courtesy higher than these inspired writers have carried it? Can woman make a greater mistake than to exchange this honor accorded to her weakness for all that can be won in bold and strenuous assertion of equality in powers and prerogatives?

## XV.

### POLISH AND SOLIDITY.

**I**N comparing rightly-educated women to hewn corner-stones of a palace or a temple (Ps. 144 : 12), the Psalmist intimates the necessity of solidity in character as the basis of beauty in character. We need not be at all troubled by any apparent inconsistency between this view of an Old-Testament writer and that of a New-Testament writer concerning the honor due to womanly *weakness*. The whole truth on such a subject cannot be expressed or shown by one figure of speech, any more than the whole form and beauty of an obelisk can be seen from one side.

If we state the whole truth concerning man, as man was originally made and still exists in duality of sex, we must say that while in some obvious respects the "feminine vessel" of humanity is weaker than

the masculine, it is equally true that in some equally important respects the masculine is the weaker. It may also be said that those respects in which men are stronger than women are such as enable men (if they will) forcibly to control women ; and, unhappily and wickedly, men have too often used this power so to control women as to prevent them from improving advantageously and usefully their real and peculiar strength. Christianity—the teaching of Christ and his apostles—is taking away from rude masculine nature its coarse fondness for such brutal power, and is more and more setting feminine human nature at advantage for developing and utilizing its finer strength for the further refinement and the meet help of man.

Quite in proportion as this is so it is becoming more and more evident that the true beauty of woman, both of body and of mind, is not only consistent with strength, but dependent on it. That idea of feminine grace and refinement which identified woman with sickly languor and lazy helplessness was a false and pernicious idea. The

women of the age are finding and showing that not by being merely dependent upon men, but by being helpers of men—helpers not merely of their pleasure, but of their work—do they fulfill their mission and attain their own highest beauty, the beauty of character.

It has been a mistake of much female education that it aimed only to make women polished, and not first to make them strong—to cultivate that which is superficial, forgetting that no surface can be permanently beautiful except the surface of that which is internally strong and solid. A block of soft sandstone cannot take and keep such a polish as a block of granite.

## XVI.

### THE LORD HEARKENING.

**D**ID it ever happen to you to hear your own little children talking together when they did not know that you were listening? And were they speaking of you, expressing, in child-like phrases, their love for you, reminding each other of your instructions and directions, and manifesting a dutiful fear of failing to do all that you wished?

Did not the sweet tones arrest your passing footsteps? And did not the sincere tribute fill your parental heart with unusual pleasure? Did not your satisfied heart say fondly of those little ones, "They are mine; they are my treasures, my jewels"? So saith the prophet Malachi, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard; . . . and they shall be mine, saith



the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Surely this is a most engaging representation of Jehovah, bending thus from the infinite height of his greatness to such little and lowly creatures as we, and attentively listening to what we may be saying to each other of him. He "hearkens and hears" when "they that fear him speak one to another." Then he cares so much what we think of him, what we say of him! This need not surprise us. What else should he care for from us if not for our dutiful and affectionate regard? He is infinitely above all need of any material gifts or any personal service which we could bestow. If he were hungry he would not tell us, for the world is his, and the fullness thereof. We do not look to our little children for the supply of our wants. Yet those prattlers can give us, with their artless lips, from their loving hearts, what enriches us more than all gains of commerce. So also, his own word assures us, the great God, our Father in heaven, values the dutiful and affectionate

converse of his lowly children, which he "hearkens to and hears," more than the "silver and gold," "the cattle upon a thousand hills" or "all the fowls of the mountains" offered up in costly sacrifice.

When you two Christian sisters met in the parlor of one of you, or stopped together for a moment as you met on the pavement, if your hearts moved you to speak of him, his work, his love, his poor, his sick, whom you visit together; of your own little ones, for whom you have agreed to pray together,—whatever was said between you on such themes from the fullness of your hearts, "the Lord hearkened and heard;" and you are at liberty to judge of the pleasure it gave him by that which filled your own hearts when, at the door of your home, you heard the happy and loving voices of your little ones prattling of "mother."

He listened to-day when you two Christian brethren met in the counting-room of one of you, to know whether all your talk was of trade and of stocks and of investments and of the vicissitudes of the currency, or whether you had some words to

exchange with each other about the progress of his kingdom or his work of grace in your own hearts or in your children's, or about some precious truth of his holy word discussed in your pulpit last Sabbath or read from the Bible this morning. Amid the hum of voices on 'change he listened whether all the talk was of finance, or whether some of his servants, meeting there, improved a moment to consult together on some theme of Christian enterprise or Christian beneficence or Christian experience. Did he not listen, with even deeper interest, to the indications of the spirit pervading and ruling the business—whether greediness of filthy lucre, ambition for mere success, unscrupulous effort to make enterprises and adventures “pay,” were its ruling elements, or whether some in the crowd were seriously yet cheerfully doing business for him, carefully ruling all its methods and processes by his law, and faithfully devoting to him all its gains, and prayerfully entrusting to him all its issues? He “hearkened and heard.” Yes, he heard all the silent thoughts as well as the spoken

words. Be comforted, ye faithful ones. The world may not know you. The din and clamor of selfish trade and ungodly business fill the public ear, and too many are ready to believe, too many wish to believe, that truth and honesty and disinterestedness are nowhere to be found among men—that all trade is unscrupulous, all legislation corrupt, all statesmanship controlled by bribery. The pure, the steadfast, the uncorrupted are not clamorous or obtrusive. They may be unknown to the world. But “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” And he will not overlook them “in the day when he makes up his jewels.”

## XVII.

### ELKANAH.

IT is said that a great man is not so apt to be the son of a great man as of a great woman. It is commonly believed that the mother's influence is more decisive of the character of her sons than their father's. I am not aware that this has been established by any careful collation and comparison of facts—not an easy thing to do—but I have no disposition to dispute it. Let the value and power of wise motherhood be extolled as much as you please; neither I nor my children will dissent. But I have a suspicion that under cover of this gallant extolling of feminine influence there is some unmanly shirking of masculine responsibility. A boy needs a father as well as a mother. The wisest woman needs a man's help to bring up boys. A man's re-

sponsibility for the tone and spirit and salutary power of the home-life is not one whit less serious than that of his wife. There may be good and great men whose sons are failures because their mothers are weak and silly and selfish. But there are most excellent mothers whose sons go wrong by preferring their fathers' examples to their mothers' precepts. There are men of decent and reputable lives, not Christians, who value highly the piety of their wives. They would be glad to see their children Christians, but leave their wives under the perplexing difficulty of showing why piety is more necessary for the mother than for the father. If such men's sons "go to the bad," will God hold their wives responsible for it?

We cannot value the example of Hannah too highly. But if Hannah were here to teach a Sunday-school class, I reckon she would talk to them of Elkanah. If she were in a mothers' meeting, and were asked to tell them about her own happy home-life, she would say, "I had such a good husband! He was a God-fearing

man. He kept God's ordinances. He went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Nothing could keep him from the house of God. Nothing could prevent him from attending to God's word and worship. And his reverent love to God made him so thoughtful and tender toward his family! He always treated us as if he felt that God gave us to him and he wanted to keep us for God. I cannot tell you how specially sympathetic he was to me in my privation of maternal joy. (See 1 Sam. 1 : 7, 8.) Much as I longed to be a mother, I could not help admitting that my husband was 'better to me than ten sons.' And then, when God had heard my prayer and had made me a mother, my husband helped me so in my devoting of our boy to God! He knew how I had prayed and how I had vowed, and he joined me in giving back our child to God, who had given him to us. So long as the child needed me to nurse him at home Elkanah cheerfully let me stay, and made his journeys to Shiloh alone (1 Sam. 1 : 22), and when little Samuel was



old enough to be safe away from me, and it was time for me to fulfill my vow, how my husband helped me! How could I have done it if he had objected or sneered or looked cold and hard? Instead of that, when I spoke to him about taking the boy to Shiloh to be brought up for the ministry of God's house according to my vow, Elkanah said, 'Do what seemeth to thee good.' When I was worrying about my lonely childlessness he had helped me to be submissive, and now, when my vow called me to make our home lonely again, he knew what it would cost me and he helped me again. He wanted me to do what was in my heart, because he knew that it was God who had put it into my heart. Dear ladies, I wish that all your sons may be like my Samuel. God can make them so. But you have a right to expect your husbands to be joined with you in asking and seeking it. If God means to make your boys like my Samuel, I think he will first make your husbands like my thoughtful, considerate, godly Elkanah."



## XVIII.

### THE CHILDLESS.

THERE are affectionate wives and generous husbands whose industry and good management have given them ample resources, whose faithful mutual love makes their house a true home, who long for the voices of children to gladden that home more than for any other possession or any other joy.

There are homes in which there is only one child, and that child and its parents long unutterably that it may have sisters or brothers, but the sovereign Author of life does not see fit to grant the desired favor. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps. 127:3). There is no department of our earthly life in which the Scriptures more distinctly affirm or more constantly recog-

nize the sovereignty of God than in this. Recall, for example, the scriptural account of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah and Elizabeth. The giving or withholding of children is always ascribed to the wise and sovereign ordering of God. The reverent recognition of this in every home is the best safeguard against all sinful keeping of homes empty and lonely.

Childlessness in wedlock is always recognized in God's word as an affliction, but no more than blindness or any other infirmity may it be taken as a proof of sin. The word of God and his providence furnish sweet consolations to those who innocently suffer it. Some such persons have been providentially permitted to adopt orphans, taking up and taking home, in the name of the Lord and for him, desolate little ones whose father and mother have forsaken them or been taken away from them. Besides all the benevolent satisfaction of this, such children by adoption do frequently reward the parental love and care by becoming as faithful and affectionate comforters and nourishers of their parents in

old age as if they had been theirs by birth. Others, out of pecuniary resources which it would have been a joy to expend upon their own offspring, find delight in helping the children of others to education fitting them for useful lives.

On a Sabbath, after I had preached to my people on the duty of the Church to replenish her ministry both by giving her sons and by making provision for their suitable education, an unmarried woman, whose life had been one of laborious and patient industry, put into my hands a note enclosing a pecuniary contribution. These were her written words: "As I have neither husband nor sons who might serve God in the ministry, I take pleasure in giving what I can in money." Ah! there are many godly maidens and many childless wives, who bear their own burdens of age and loneliness which dutiful children could do so much to lighten,—many such to whose skillful fingers and generous hearts missionaries and students for the ministry, as well as orphans and inmates of asylums, are indebted for more than they know. These

godly women often dwell in obscurity. Their names are not widely known on earth, but their ministry is a most beneficent one, and He for whose sake they render it will not fail to give them the promised reward. Even on earth they may win such love and grateful remembrance as were given to Dorcas, and Jehovah will give them "in his house and within his walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters" (Isa. 56 : 5).

As I write these words I recall many a profitable hour spent in conversing with a venerable woman beside whose coffin I stood only a few days ago. A wise counselor, a sympathizing friend, a diligent helper to her pastor, nearly all the homes and hearts in her village were familiar with her womanly Christian ministration. Its most elegant, its most lowly, even its most squalid, homes had been brightened by her presence. On her coffin lay a floral anchor fastened with a white ribbon bearing the inscription, "Her children arise up and call her blessed." No children were hers by birth. She was a maiden. But the children reared in her

church's Sabbath-school for more than a half century love to be called "her children," and there are among them gray-haired men who remember no Sabbath-school instruction earlier than that which they received standing erect by her side when they were only tall enough to lay their small hands on her knee. Do not some who read this recall with loving gratitude the great, wise motherliness of some maidens presiding over or teaching in seminaries, living such lives as Mary Lyon's and Fidelia Fiske's, and whom hundreds of women, in hundreds of happy homes, teach their children to call blessed?

## XIX.

### BRING THE CHILDREN.

**I**N recent discussions concerning the Sabbath-school one prominent question is, "How can we secure the attendance of Sabbath-school children upon the services of the sanctuary, upon the preaching of the gospel?"

So far as this question relates to the children of Christian parents, I would say to such parents, This is not a question for the Sabbath-school teachers, but for you; and the true answer to it is, simply, **BRING THEM.**

Whence comes the notion that parental authority is out of place here? Is there anything else affecting seriously the training and education of your children in respect to which you leave them wholly to their own choice? Do you not decide authoritatively when they shall attend school and what school they shall attend? And

do you not require them to go regularly and punctually, whether they wish to go or not? Can you safely let them live through the years in which habits are formed and not bring your parental authority to bear (if need be) upon the question whether they shall form the habit of going regularly to the house of God on the Sabbath?

The Lord said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." This evidently was a high divine commendation of Abraham. It is for just such holy use that God has given authority to parents.

Yet I am far from believing that any harsh or stern use of parental authority is needed. It is another good sign of our times that ministers are studying more than ever to make the pulpit attractive to the young. Many are doing this with good success. Particularly, we are learning that it is not necessary to separate children from adults in our ministrations. There are, now-a-days, some pastors who come weekly among their flocks, bringing their



armfuls of sheaves with which to feed them, who always cull out some of the finest and fullest ears with which to feed the lambs, "rubbing them in their hands" most winningly and dropping the bright kernels within their reach. Some of these, after a little, conclude to leave all the straw at home, and the chaff too, bringing only the clean winnowed grain, all in such shape that the lambs can eat of it. Very noticeable is it that they find the sheep also to feed and fatten all the better.

In utmost seriousness and earnestness would I press the thought that this bringing of children and adults together into a more real and hearty and genial companionship in biblical study, and in hearing the gospel, and in all Christian life, is one of the most important efforts that the Church now has in hand. I know nothing of ordinances, nothing of privileges in the Church of Christ, to which I do not understand Christ to say, "*Bring the children;*" "Suffer the little children to come, and forbid them not."



## XX.

“MARY!”—“RABBONI.”

THESE were the first words exchanged between the risen Saviour and any other person. His first word is that sweet name which was borne by his virgin mother and by a number of his female disciples. No other name of woman would be pronounced so often in his hearing during all his childhood as that by Joseph in the Nazareth home.

If we did not know, and were asked to guess, to which of the women who loved him he would first show himself alive after his resurrection, should we not say, “To his mother”? It was not so, however. Where was that Mary, “blessed among women”? Why was not she to whom he was given as an infant the first to greet him rising from the dead? Had that sword which pierced through her soul when she saw him hanging

on the cross wounded her so deeply that physical powers were quite prostrated? We vainly conjecture. Surely He who with his expiring breath had committed his mother to his beloved disciple in words of such tenderness was not forgetful nor unfeeling toward her when he came back from the sepulchre. Yet it is instructive that she has no prominence in the resurrection-scene nor in all that followed—no distinction at all like that which the Romish superstition assigns her. Another Mary has the precedence and pre-eminence among the witnesses of the resurrection—Mary Magdalene. She is conspicuous for her thankful love to Jesus, and for her affecting reason for it—his delivering her from a sevenfold demoniacal possession. It has been wrongly assumed that she had been eminent for wickedness, and so her name has been taken to indicate the deepest guilt and shame of womanhood. There is no evidence of this. The demons may have “possessed” her in that strange way of bodily subjection to their malignant power which Jesus so often relieved, without having gained any unusual

ascendency over her mind and will. She was a great sufferer, and no doubt was a sinner, thankfully recognizing Jesus as her Saviour from sin. But we have no evidence that she had been an immoral or vicious woman.

She loved her Lord with a most fervent and most reverent affection. How strongly is this shown by her pained exclamation when she found the sepulchre empty!—"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him;" and again, to him, "supposing him to be the gardener:" "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." She had not recognized her Lord when he asked her why she wept without calling her by name, but when he said "*Mary!*" it fell on her ear "like the deep tones of some rich instrument."

It was the same mighty voice which hushed the fury of the tempest and which woke the dead Lazarus. It was the same gentle voice which had soothed so many hearts with "Thy sins be forgiven thee." She knew it in its deep power and in its infinite sweetness. She heard and felt both

in its uttering of her own name, "*Mary!*" No added words were needed to convey to her all of comfort, of assurance, of manifestation of her risen Lord which her crushed heart needed. And only one word was needed to convey fully to him all her heart's trustful, satisfied, thankful, obedient response, "RABBONI!"—"My Master!" The word by which John renders the Syriac into Greek is "master," in the sense of "teacher." It is the term which corresponds with "disciple." The fullest, the most teachable, the most loving and obedient, discipleship is what Mary professes and her Lord accepts.

Is that the word which your heart whispers to him now? which your lips would utter if he stood now before you as Mary saw him in the garden? "*Rabboni!*"—"My Teacher!" Does your heart say that, *meaning everything* which it implies? Then you need not doubt that he writes your name on the same roll with all his Marys, and you shall, by and by, hear him speak it in a voice of love that will gladden you more than all the songs of the seraphim.

## XXI.

### THE WITNESSING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

WHAT is that co-witnessing of the Spirit with our own spirit, "that we are children of God," of which Paul speaks (Rom. 8 : 15)?

To answer this question correctly we must compare this passage with others which treat of the Holy Spirit's working in his people. If it is true that we are "*led* by the Spirit of God"—that we are tractable to his evident impulses, easily governed by those convictions of duty which he works in our minds, attentive to those suggestions of duty which he awakens, faithful and studious in those inquiries after our duty to which he prompts; if also the temper of our minds is affected as his word teaches us to expect him to affect it; if the word of God and his ordinances and means of grace are producing those good spiritual effects of

which we know from the Bible that he only makes them efficacious; if "the fruit of the Spirit," which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," be produced in our life, then the Holy Spirit, who is clearly revealed as the Author of all these, may most properly be said to be testifying or witnessing to our adoption. He is giving us the clearest and best evidence of it.

All these effects are wrought upon ourselves. They are effects of which we are conscious. They are states or exercises of our own minds. Thus the Spirit witnesses *with* our spirit. It is a co-witnessing. The action of the Holy Spirit upon our minds, and the responsive action of our minds in consequence, concur in this testimony. They are correlative and complementary to each other. Both are required to complete the testimony.

To regard anything short of this as the "witness of the Spirit" is delusive. A confidence that one is saved apart from any actual manifestation of real Christian char-

acter is not the Holy Spirit's witnessing. It is our own vain assumption.

Yet there is more in this "witnessing of the Spirit" than the logical inference of our being children of God deduced from our possessing the proper character of his children. In his lovely office of Comforter the Holy Spirit directly enables us to feel these proofs of our adoption. He diffuses a holy joy through our souls on account of them. Thus he strengthens our hope and gives us "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."



## XXII.

### OBEY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THERE are persons who are already so affected by the Holy Spirit's influences that they are inquiring with earnest solicitude what they must do to be saved. They are made sensible that they are guilty and ruined. The evil of their doings and of their hearts is so disclosed to them that they are alarmed and ashamed and distressed. Dear friend, you are the subject of the Holy Spirit's strivings. He is calling you to repentance. He is moving upon your mind with a saving influence. Will you yield yourself up to it? Will you obey him? Have you duly considered that you stand at the door which opens into the narrow way that leadeth unto life, and that it is the hand of God the Holy Spirit that draws you toward that door—that it is he whose help and whose guidance you must

have at every step of that narrow way if you are truly to pursue it to its happy and glorious end?

Do you indeed want his help and his guidance? Do you wish him to take this friendly office upon him? Then *obey* him. Follow his present call. Yield to his present promptings. Withdraw not your hand; let him lead you through that door. But perhaps you do not see it. It is not clear to your view that you do stand at so critical a point. Still obey the Spirit; obey God. Do what his word directs you to do. Do what your own judgment, enlightened by Scripture, decides to be right. Do what, with unwonted seriousness, you feel that you ought to do.

Is it to *pray*? Have you refused or neglected until now to bow the knee even in secret to the great God? Is it clear to your mind that he demands that homage, and that you need help which none but he can give? and does an unseen and unaccountable influence urge you to fall down before him? Obey, or consent that the friendly Spirit shall leave you.

Is it to make *confession* of some wrong which you have done to a fellow-creature—some act of disobedience to a parent, some word of unkindness to a brother or sister or schoolmate or companion, some dishonesty in business, some rudeness or deceit in social life—something, *anything*, which is not according to the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as ye would have them do to you”? And does that wrong thing press on your conscience, and does the duty of confession press you, and does the pride of your heart plead and seek to evade the matter and refuse to yield? Choose whether you will obey the Spirit, and thus invite his continuance with you, or whether you will resist, and thus distinctly say, “Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” The question of your salvation may turn upon some such common, practical thing. The great question is, whether you will *obey* the Spirit of God; and his manner is often to try that question on some such plain matter of practical duty.

Or is the question with you whether you will give up some favorite *pleasure* or some

object of strong desire, or whether, by one comprehensive act of consecration, you will renounce the world and give yourself up to God? And does desire strongly plead, and does inclination strongly resist conscience, and is the struggle hard between your love of the world and your sense of duty? On which side of that struggle, think you, is the Holy Spirit enlisted? Will you obey him?

Yes, it is the Spirit who urges you to that which you feel to be right; and when you begin to *obey* him you will have begun to walk in the way of life, for he will lead you in no other; and you will have begun a life in which yet larger measures of his saving influence will be given.

Blessed are they who are "*led* by the Spirit of God;" "they are the children of God." Do any truly want that gracious adoption? do any wish to be henceforth *God's children*? Surely they will not resist his Spirit. They, knowing in themselves how he is now dealing with them, will yield to his power, will obey his voice, will accept his seal upon them. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

## XXIII.

### FILIAL TRUST.

“**A**T that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16: 26, 27).

I was once requested to go into the chamber of one who lay very sick, and to pray with her. She was dear to my family, to my people and to me. I felt sure that she was dearer to the Lord. She was a woman in whom the heart of her husband had safely trusted; whose children (although hers not by birth, but by her marriage to their father) “arose up and called her blessed;” to whom many poor and many needing instruction and comfort were wont to look trustfully. How we should miss her if she should go away and we see her no more!

How we do miss her now from our places of Christian concourse and from her customary walks of Christian usefulness! Her husband knelt with me beside the bed whereon the sick one lay. Gently, noiselessly, we had come thither, as her extreme weakness demanded. I was touched by the pale sadness on that husband's calm face, through which there shone a light of tranquil satisfaction and assurance as the setting sun's radiance mildly streams through the cloud that hides him. Was I to lead him in prayer there? Was I to utter his petition for her? Even so do intelligent and devout believers in the one only Mediator still scripturally honor Christian brotherhood and the pastoral relation.

But need I offer any petition, any entreaty, to Him "who loved us and gave himself for us"? Would I entreat this pale husband not to harm this wife of his tender and grateful love? As little, far less, need I supplicate Him who has bought her with his blood and called her into the kingdom of his grace and renewed her by his Spirit, not to let any evil thing befall her.

My voice is hushed, my heart is quiet; I feel His presence who took Peter's wife's mother by the hand, and to whom Martha sobbed, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." He is here. Our sister shall not die, for whosoever "liveth and believeth in him shall never die." He may take her soon to be "with him, where he is"—to rest and to dwell in the mansion prepared for her. Shall I entreat him not to do this? Does kindness to her or trust in him allow me to pray thus? Can even her husband put his unselfish heart into that petition if I do utter it? What have we to ask for with strong entreaty, being consciously under Jesus' eye, assured that his everlasting arm is underneath her? Our prayer is not, cannot be, entreaty. It is trustful reference to his wise, holy, gracious will: "Lord, she whom thou lovest is sick." That is enough. We leave her thus, and our hearts rest in assurance of this wise and faithful love.

More than a score of years ago I walked back and forth in our family-room bearing in my arms our infant of one year, pale and



thin, swiftly growing paler and thinner, with sharp and rapid disease. Never have I seen a lovelier face, never have I looked into deeper eyes, never have my hands handled a fairer form. Never has my heart dilated with a sweeter joy than that with which his bright joyous smile daily filled it. Must I part with him so soon? Would the Lord take him away so quickly? Could we spare him? Should I lay the babe in tenderer arms and go away to some deep solitude, where, out of all human hearing, I could pour out my soul unto God "with strong crying and tears"? Could I win that sweet life by mighty Israel-like wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant? I felt no impulse to such prayer. I asked myself, "Can I refuse to this dear lamb the infinite privilege of being gathered now into the bosom of the Good Shepherd—gathered into eternal safety, without any experience of the evil or exposure to the perils that are in this world? Shall I set our need of him in opposition to Christ's care for him?" I could not entreat for my boy's continuance in our home; I could not trust my own heart.

It seemed better to pray, "Lord, thou knowest what is best. Let that be done."

Tell me, ye who know the power of prayer, did I fail to use it? Did I miss my privilege?

Is it because I was not "strong in faith" that I have not now the helping companionship of the young, strong man that my boy would now be? Or may I thankfully take the peace and the sweetness with which all our memories of that one year are suffused, and all the gentle and hallowed influence which from that year has flowed down our life, as a most fatherly answer to submissive prayer? Is it our Christian privilege to feel so assured that "the Father himself loveth us" that in such moments we may leave everything to him, not needing to ask anything of him? Does our great Advocate intimate in that text that we may rest in such faith in him that we shall not always need to think of him as interceding for us? At least, does he not teach us that we are never to regard the Father as needing to be persuaded by his prayer for us—much less by our prayers? May Christian prayer

be not only a power for obtaining from God "such things as we have need of," but also a power whereby we ourselves may be so lodged in the confidence of God that, "looking unto" him and assured that he looketh on us, we feel (sometimes) no need and no disposition to ask anything—just resting on God and "waiting patiently" for him?

## XXIV.

### FROM BETHEL TO PENIEL.

**I**T sometimes happens that a youth has grown up from infancy in a Christian home, under Christian instruction and government and with habits of visible conformity to Christian rules, but without a spiritual Christian experience. He has never revolted against parental authority. He has never gone among the sons of Belial. He has never forsaken the sanctuary, nor shown irreverence toward the family altar or the Sabbath or the Bible. He is no fornicator or profane person. He is not a blasphemer nor a scoffer nor a drunkard. He has not denied, perhaps has not questioned, the truth of what parents and teachers and pastors have taught him. He believes in God the Maker of heaven and earth, and would affirm that God is everywhere.

Yet never, in any spot where he has ever

been, has he distinctly and vividly felt God's presence as a *reality to him*—never at any moment has it seemed to him, “*Now* God is immediately dealing with me, speaking to me personally, in his commands, his calls, the offer of his gospel.” Never has he been made to feel, “Now, this hour, this instant, God is demanding of me that I answer to his call, that I deal personally, directly, frankly with him, that *now* I tell him what I will do about this, whether I will now hearken to his commandment—whether, from now, I will have him for my God, his crucified Son for my Saviour and my Lord.”

Such a youth seems to me much like Jacob when he lay down a little way from Luz in the open field, with a stone for his pillow. Not blameless indeed has Jacob's life been ; what young man's has been, even the most decent and dutiful ? Jacob remembers very selfish and unbrotherly behavior of which he has been guilty. He has in his heart memories that are harder than the stone on which his head lies. There are things for which he blames himself and despises him-

self, yet he has never purposed in his heart to forsake the God of his fathers. Will God now manifest himself to the soul of the wanderer? Yes, the set time has come. Sovereignly, graciously, wonderfully, God makes Jacob feel that he, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, is willing to be *his* God and the God of the numerous offspring of whom he will make him father.

The way in which God did this for Jacob is not the important matter—the dream, the ladder, the angels. The *fact* that he did it is the important thing. He may do it as effectually to-day to you with no visible ladder and no audible rustle of angelic robes and wings. The decisive hour may be signaled to you, alone in your chamber, by the sudden sight of your dead mother's picture, or of the old rocking-chair in which you have been hushed to sleep on her bosom, or of the old Bible from which she read to you. Do you not still hear her sweet voice even as it told you the story of Jesus? Do you not feel her hand even as yours touched it while she taught you "Our Father" and "Now I lay me down

to sleep"? When she who has gone to God is so with you, do you not know that her God is not far off? Away from your home, among strangers, homesick and lonely, hiding your heartache from unsympathizing companions, and trying to hide it from yourself by busy activity, the hour of God's mercy may come to you in vivid memory of past instruction and penitent regret for too long neglect of it.

In the sanctuary such a gracious hour may come. Seated among the worshipers, attentive to the word, you may find that word just suited to you—you may feel it to be God's special voice to you: "My son, know thou the God of thy fathers;" "I am thy father's God; give me thy heart."

Dear youth, this is your *Bethel*. To you God *is here*, as you never before have found him. Answer as Jacob answered: "Henceforth Jehovah shall be my God," and you will never forget that Bethel. You will always love to come back to it—often in thoughts, sometimes, if possible, in bodily visitation.

But Jacob could not stay at his Bethel,



any more than Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration. The Old-Testament narrative soon takes Jacob far away "into the land of the people of the East." There for a score of years he toils and thrives in the service of Laban. He shows great tact and energy, and wins the ordinary rewards of diligence in business—wins, upon the whole, the respect of Laban. In due time he sets his face toward Canaan, the land promised to his posterity. Now he journeys not alone "with his staff," but having become "two bands." With wives and children, a numerous household, with flocks and herds and servants, a notable retinue, he is marching westward. A crisis comes in that progress. The Edomite chief, his formidable brother Esau, is reported coming against him with four hundred men. Is he coming in unappeased anger to avenge the fraud and supplanting of so long ago? Jacob omits no careful provision, neglects no likely means of softening or of escaping his brother's rage. But, above all his skillful arrangements and provisions, his reliance is upon prayer. He will go alone to God and

earnestly seek his interposition. Sending all the objects of his care "over the brook," "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."

Jacob seems not to have been surprised by this mystical encounter. He seems rather to have sought it. It does not come on him as a surprise, like the earlier vision at Bethel. Between Bethel and Peniel, in those twenty years in the East, Jacob has had a great deal of experience. The narrative sketches with exceeding brevity even its outward and secular incidents. Few and slight are the notes which hint to us of his spiritual experiences, yet they are sufficient to show that he was happily conscious, and Laban frankly admitted, that "the God of his father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac was with him" (Gen. 30 : 27 ; 31 : 42).

*A busy, diligent, thrifty life is not inconsistent with growing and deepening godliness.*

Now, in this great need and crisis Jacob avails himself of his acquaintance with God, and God reveals himself more nearly and

more impressively than before. The earlier experience made Jacob feel that he was in God's house; at the ford of Jabbok he felt that he had "seen God face to face." Perpetually, therefore, in the holy geography of those lands those memorable places bear in Hebrew the names GOD'S HOUSE and GOD'S FACE.

Are there not busy and diligent Christians now with us who have had their Bethel, but do not know that they may have their Peniel?

Surely you have done well to go often to your Bethel, to worship with thanksgiving the God who there made himself known to you as *your* God. But now, at this difficult Jabbok which you have to cross, in presence of this great trial or peril which you have to face, you need not look far up the ladder which angels are climbing nor listen for the voice that shall come down from far above. Lo! the ANGEL is here, the MAN with whom you may wrestle, to whose neck you may cling with the grasp that will not let go without the blessing.

Speak not of "the *power* of prayer;" 'tis

the confessed and clinging weakness that God cannot resist. Not the soul struggling with him, but the soul hanging on him in submissive dependence prevails. "When I am weak, then am I strong;" "His strength is made perfect in weakness."

"Come, O thou traveler unknown,  
Whom still I hold, but cannot see;  
My company before is gone,  
And I am left alone with thee;  
With thee all night I mean to stay,  
And wrestle till the break of day.

"I need not tell thee who I am;  
My sin and misery declare;  
Thyself hast called me by my name;  
Look on thy hands, and read it there;  
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?  
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

"In vain thou strugglest to get free;  
I never will unloose my hold;  
Art thou the Man that died for me?  
The secret of thy love unfold:  
Wrestling, I will not let thee go  
Till I thy name, thy nature, know.

"Wilt thou not yet to me reveal  
Thy new, unutterable name?  
Tell me, I still beseech thee, tell;  
To know it now resolved I am:  
Wrestling, I will not let thee go  
Till I thy name, thy nature, know.

“What though my shrinking flesh complain,  
And murmur to contend so long :  
I rise superior to my pain ;  
When I am weak, then am I strong ;  
And when my all of strength shall fail,  
I shall with the God-man prevail.”

## XXV.

### SYMPATHY AND PRAYER.

“**A** PASTOR in distress for his people, his work and himself, asks your prayers and those of your people.”

This comes to us by mail. It is without date and without signature, and the postmark is illegible. I have no conjecture whence or from whom it comes. It is like a cry coming in darkness over the water or through the forest or across the lonely prairie—a human voice uttering a cry of distress, but giving no information as to what kind of distress it is. It is an articulate voice, not calling for human help, but asking us to pray God to grant his help.

Our response may suitably be in the words of the twentieth Psalm: “The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen

thee out of Zion ; remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifices ; grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel."

Yet it is not amiss for us to consider and try to conjecture what the distress may be in which we are thus plaintively entreated to give our prayerful sympathy.

"A pastor in distress for his people." Is the hand of God upon them, inflicting loss or bereavement? Is it famine or pestilence or terrible losses by fire or flood under which the faces of that people gather blackness and the heart of their pastor aches in sympathetic sorrow? No, his distress is "for his *work*"—for his people, then (we may fairly infer), because his work does not prosper among them. His work as a pastor he doubtless means ; the work for the sake of which he has been made a pastor and his people sustain him ; the work of caring for their souls, of applying the gospel of God to their needs, of reclaiming them from sin, of leading them to Christ, of nurturing them in the faith, of helping them to Christian usefulness and Christian enjoyment, and



finally to heaven. His distress for this work surely can only be because he does not see it advancing prosperously. What hinders? Are there bitter dissensions among the people, alienations, strifes, mutual coldness and disdain? Have those who should be helpers of his ministry forsaken him, like Demas "having loved this present world"? Have "grievous wolves come in, not sparing the flock"? Have false teachers and seducers drawn away into error and corruption numbers of the souls he has been set to watch over? Any of these would be sufficient to justify his appeal and to account for his sorrow. But his message reaches a still deeper pathos when it adds that his distress is for "himself." A deep searching of heart is there. He has been meditating on his own ministry among that people, and his clear perception of its defectiveness is the iron which enters into his soul most deeply. He questions himself painfully: "Am I at fault for the want of success of my preaching and of all my ministry? Alas! in many ways I have come short most wretchedly. I ought to have been more studious, so as

to have put into my sermons more thought in more clear, more impressive, more persuasive utterance. I ought to have been more watchful against the various evil influences to which one and another of my people are exposed. I ought to have been more attentive socially to some who for lack of that perhaps are drifting away from my influence. I ought to have been more prompt and faithful and courageous in admonishing some whom I have seen yielding to temptation. Perhaps at the very beginning of their yielding my faithful remonstrance would have saved them."

This sense of shortcoming and of delinquency may amount even to the fear that he himself has not a true experience of the grace of God, and may at last be "a cast-away." Even then, most likely, his worst fear is for his people—his keenest pain from the thought that they should suffer such a calamity as to be under the care of one so unworthy. Like David of old when he saw the angel with his sword drawn over Jerusalem, he exclaims, "Let thy hand be upon

me, I pray thee, but not on thy people, that they should be destroyed."

He asks us to pray for him; and indeed we will, for the Scripture saith, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." Willingly would we reciprocate our brother's confession of faults and his request for prayer if we knew him and his people. We would also bid him read and take to heart Psalm 42: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance." Do not let humility degenerate into despondency. Do not imagine that all your reasons for shame and penitence are reasons for despair. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

## XXVI.

### PRAYER OF THE UNCONVERTED.

MAY one who has not been born again pray? Does such an one displease God and add to his own guilt by praying? Is it right to advise an anxious sinner to pray? These are practical questions of no small importance. Let us seek the true answer to them. The Bible must guide us.

1. Evidently prayer *in its completeness* cannot be realized by an unregenerate soul. It involves repentance, submission to God's will and faith. The soul which fulfills these is born again. Prayer fulfilled is as good evidence of the new life as breathing is of the natural life.

2. I cannot think that an awakened sinner's attempt to pray is an offence to God or adds to his guilt and condemnation. Can we warn impenitent men to flee from the coming wrath, can we put forth all our

powers of logic, of rhetoric, of scriptural exposition, of solemn warning, of graphic description and of earnest declarations to convince them of their infinite peril, and when they wake up and begin to cry to God for mercy, blame them for that cry—charge that terror upon them as additional sin? Would the sinner be less guilty, less displeasing to God, if he felt no terror?

3. *Prayer may be the transitional act*—the act in which the soul passes into the regenerate condition—passes from impenitence to piety, from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. If a sinful soul is awakened to a sense of its guilt and need and peril, and begins to cry to God for mercy, is not the Holy Spirit then presenting Christ to that soul and leading it to trust in him, to cry unto God through him? Trustfully accepting Christ, throwing itself fully on him, such a soul becomes regenerate, receives “power to become a child of God.” What human eye shall undertake the nice discrimination whereby it can detect the point at which the spontaneous cry of terror arising from agonized natural sensibility

passes into the aspiration of a true Christian faith, uniting the soul to Christ in newness of life?

Verily, I know no more hopeful or practicable way by which to lead an awakened soul to Christ than this very way of prayer. I would exhort every such soul to pray—not, by any means, as if its prayers could have merit, but as the only intelligible way of beginning to obey the call, “Come unto me.” Nor would I neglect to assure such an one that, although his attempt to come should be like the feeble and timid infant’s first attempt to walk, the heavenly Father will lean forward and reach out his gracious arms to prevent the fall and to draw the trembling one home to his breast.

## XXVII.

### ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

A FRIEND calls my attention to the following passage in a work of Miss Muloch:

“The doctrine of ‘Answers to Prayer,’ literal and material, always appeared to me egregious folly or conceited profanity. Is the great Ruler of the universe to stop its machinery for me? Is the wise evolution of certain events from certain causes, continuing unerringly its mysterious round, by which all things come alike to all and for the final good of all, to be upset in its workings for my individual benefit? No; I would not, I dare not, believe such a thing. But I do believe in the eternal Spirit’s influence upon our spirits in momentous crises and in a very distinct and solemn way, often remembered for years.”

Has Miss Muloch given the true view of



this universe, or of its Author and Governor, or of his relations to us? I think not. I cannot accept this quotation as a correct statement of the doctrine of providence and of prayer. What she in terms rejects is not what any one holds, so far as I know.

Suppose the skillful maker of a locomotive to be *in* it, guiding and governing it. Suppose you should see him, by the pressure of his hand upon its springs or levers, increasing or diminishing its speed, and now and then stopping it. Is this free action of his hand in and upon its machinery, modifying the results which its forces and adjustments would naturally work out, a *violation* of its laws or a *disparagement* of their excellence?

If you observe that he passes some stations at full speed and halts at others, according as a signal is or is not raised, intimating intelligibly to him the desire of passengers to be taken up, is this unworthy of him? Does it abate from your admiration of the wisdom with which he made and now runs his machine?

Of course he will not consent that his

machine shall "be upset in its workings for my individual benefit;" but perhaps he made it with such skill and foresight that he can accommodate its running to my need, as I *signal* to him, without "upsetting" it or throwing it off the track.

If he *foreknew* precisely my need, and had it in view, before he built the engine or laid the track, and so has no need of my signal, yet thinks it best for me to be required to give the signal in order to get the accommodation or benefit, may he not have that rule and act upon it?

You see large quantities of ice formed every winter. You believe (I presume) that this is a natural result of physical laws and forces as old as creation. You can take a small quantity of that water into your laboratory in July and make such an *adjustment* of natural laws and forces as to congeal it. With better and larger apparatus you could do the same on a much larger scale. God surely can make such an adjustment of physical forces, without altering any physical *law*, as to raise many barrels of that water far up into the air,

congeal it and drop it destructively upon corn and cattle. Is it certain that he does not do this by an intervention as special as yours in your laboratory, yet no more choosing to annul or subvert his own natural laws than you are *able* to subvert them?

You *may* interpose, as above, at the request of your friend. Suppose that you were sagacious enough to foresee, a year beforehand, that he would make such a request, and you should purchase or make apparatus with reference to it, would he be less ready to acknowledge your politeness in complying with his request? Would it seem, or would it be, a less *real* compliance?

Is Miss Muloch sure that God may not apply his invisible apparatus to the surface of a lake when devout people *ask* him to for their parched fields, and, because they ask him, may produce a shower of rain by as special an intervention as you would make in dipping up water to sprinkle on a flower-bed, and with just as little "upsetting" or disturbance of the machinery of nature in one case as in the other?

My friend says that she has been troubled and unable to sleep well since Miss Muloch's mistaken view came into her mind. I do not wonder. Doubtless she has felt as if she were on a train of cars on an endless track, and the engineer, after starting the locomotive, had stepped off, leaving it to run according to its own unalterable law. Let her know that that is a nightmare illusion. The engineer is in his seat; his hand is on the machine, and his mind is in it. That slender cord, too weak to resist, or even to check, any motion of the engine, does reach the *engineer*, and he will heed the pull which your feeble hand gives it. He will not stop the engine. But he is running it not with indifference to your destiny, or even to your desires. There is a wide and sufficient margin within which he can and will modify its movement at the pull of that cord. He may send back a brakeman even to your seat with secret messages for your ear or on errands of considerate attention to your wants.

Miss Muloch avows her "belief in the Eternal Spirit's influence upon our spirits

in momentous crises and in a very distinct and solemn way, often remembered for years."

She is right in this, and if she will duly consider all that is involved in this, I believe she will see that the same Eternal Spirit has equal power and liberty in the material universe, among the laws and forces which he instituted and upholds, and in which he perpetually and wisely works—works, indeed, in a very orderly manner, which we are able to learn, and to which we can easily adapt ourselves—but sometimes, "in momentous crises" and in conformity with our prayers, *influencing* the ordinary natural forces unto *special* results "in a very distinct and solemn way," sometimes in a very kind way, "often remembered for years"—yes, for a lifetime.

## XXVIII.

### "UNANSWERED PRAYER."

IT is quite common to hear prayer spoken of as "unanswered" when its petitions are not granted. This seems to me an unhappy and misleading use of terms. When a letter which you have written to a friend is unanswered, it is difficult to be free from a feeling of neglect. If your letter conveyed a request, and your friend replies declining to grant it, and giving his reasons or assuring you that he has good reasons which it would be unwise to state, he has answered your request, although he has not granted it. If his reasons are good, or if, not knowing his reasons, you have confidence in him, you are satisfied. You may even feel as thankful as if he had done what you desired, for his letter may give you strong evidence of his love for you and of his wisdom and goodness.

How was it with Moses? He greatly desired to go into the Promised Land, leading the people whom he had led all the way from Egypt. He besought the Lord for this. There was a decisive reason, and one that was very humbling to Moses, why God could not grant his request. He told him so plainly, and somewhat sternly, but took him up "into the top of Pisgah" and gave him such a vision and such an experience as showed God's wonderful love to him. Do you think that Moses would ever speak of God as having failed to answer his prayer? Paul had a similar experience. He was worried by "a thorn in his flesh"—whatever he meant by that; something distressing or irksome, we may be sure. "Concerning this thing," says Paul, "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:8, 9). Paul felt this to be even a sweeter answer to his prayer than the granting of what he asked would have been. "Most gladly, therefore," he cheerfully adds, "will I rather glory in



my weakness, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me."

Have not many of us had similar experiences? Has not God often answered our prayer with a firm and clear refusal to grant what we asked? and have we not afterward felt that this was better for us than to have given us the thing that we asked for? Has not this been as evident to us in respect to our heavenly Father as it is now in respect to our childish experiences of our mothers' discriminating wisdom? From mothers and fathers, and from God, some of the best answers to requests are refusals to grant them.

I lately expressed this view in the hearing of a wise man, who replied, "That is merely verbal." I do not deny it. I consider that verbal accuracy is a good helper as well as a good instrument of logical accuracy. Precision of speech both results from and tends to precision of thought. Words not only express thoughts, but lead thought. An inaccurate use of words reacts upon us to encourage inaccurate thinking. Therefore I hold it important to say

what we think as accurately as we can, in order that we may think, and help others to think, as accurately as possible.

When I ask something of my heavenly Father, and he says tenderly, "No, my child, that is not best for you," or says solemnly, "No, my child; you have behaved so that I cannot properly grant you that," I cannot make it seem dutiful to say that he has not answered me. He has given me the wisest, kindest, best answer that he could give.

If I take it so, not in reluctant submission to "the inevitable," but in loyal, loving submission to the fatherly, there is then no knowing into what Pisgah he may next take me up. And what if I should not come back? What then?

## XXIX.

### MOVING MOUNTAINS.

I HAVE some excellent friends—devout Christians they are, too—who insist that diseases are now suddenly cured by prayer, without medicine or other natural means. They think that this might be done often if only we would pray believing, not doubting that what we ask shall be done. They understand God to promise this in his word—*e. g.* in James 5 : 14, 15.

If they are right in their interpretation of that passage, and in claiming unlimited availability for it, why should such expectation be limited to the healing of diseases? Our Lord spoke in quite as strong and unqualified terms about removing mountains. Can we literally do this by prayer? My father told me of a man in Massachusetts who wanted a big rock removed from his dooryard, and did not see why he could not

pray it away instead of digging and blasting and hauling it away. He tried it, and failed. Shall we conclude that he failed only because he had not faith enough? Did the Lord's promise apply to that? If the man had believed, "beyond all lingering of doubt," that the rock was going, would it have gone? Such would seem to be our Lord's teaching taken in exact literalness. Ought we to take it so? And must we tax ourselves with want of faith until we can take it so? "Believe in God." Yes, I do believe in him; I believe in his power to make any big stone that lies in my way move out of my way. I believe in his power to make the weeds in my garden wither and disappear without my pulling them up, and to make the beans and corn and parsnips grow without my planting and watering them. But ought I to ask him to do so and to believe that he will? I do not believe that, for I think that God has plainly enough revealed to me his will that I should weed and till my garden, and as to any big stone in my path, that I should knock it into pieces or blow it into pieces with powder or

pry it out of the way, or else let it lie there and make my path around it. And I think that true faith is shown in complying with my heavenly Father's will and conditions, not in expecting him to comply with mine.

If he should ever need me to go on such an errand or embassy as those on which he sent his prophets and apostles, and should bid me attest my commission from him by doing such signs as no man can do unless God be with him, then I shall have no right to doubt his power to heal the sick or raise the dead by my word, for it will be his word through me. Then, my good brothers and sisters, you may charge me with want of faith if I do not utter God's word of command to the forces of nature with full expectation of being obeyed. Reverently, I do not undertake such works now, because he has not given me any such commission.

Do I not, then, pray for the sick? Indeed I do, and I believe that God hears me always, and always gives me a kind answer. But sometimes that answer is, "It is not my will to send bodily healing; I have some better thing for the sufferer." Is it faith

which accepts such an answer not only submissively, but thankfully? Must such submissive faith be censured as weak, not strong enough to raise up the sick? I cannot think that our Lord's instructions to "believe that we have" what we pray for is to be taken apart from all other biblical instruction. To make it a promise to us, we must be sure that what we ask, and why we ask it, and how we ask it, are all agreeable to God's will. If he does ever make any one know his will in any case of sickness or bodily infirmity or deformity, such an one may know what his answer to the prayer will be. To me it seems a great privilege to be so encouraged to hope for what I pray for. It does not make the privilege less precious nor the hope less sweet to hold it in submission to the will of God, while I do not yet know what that will is. And if afterward I find that God's will is not as I had desired, may I not well feel that still I have what I asked for? For was not my supreme prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt"?

## XXX.

### WRITING TO GOD.

THERE was a touching story current a few years ago of a little orphan boy who had been taught something of Christian truth, and who in his great destitution wrote a letter telling of his need, addressing it to the "Lord Jesus in heaven," and put it into the post-office with a simple faith that it would reach him. Virtually and effectually it did, and brought the needed aid by the hand of a servant of the Lord Jesus, who recognized the reasonableness of the boy's faith, and was willing, in his Master's name, to overlook the crudeness of his method. No doubt the Master is quite as gentle. He has to overlook some element of superstition or formalism, or even something worse, in many prayers which he yet graciously answers, and by means of his answer teaches his poor, stumbling,



awkward petitioners the way of God more perfectly.

Saying nothing about the post-office, would it not have been difficult for any theologian to tell the little boy why it is not even as rational to write to God as to speak to him? Is there any more or worse anthropomorphism (*i. e.* imagining God like unto man) in imagining our handwriting coming under his eyes than in imagining our cry coming up into his ears? Is it any more absurd to think of him reading our letters than hearing our voices? Any honest utterance to him of our right desires *reaches* him.

We read of some heathen who write their prayers on costly perfumed paper, and then burn the paper, that the prayers may ascend with the sweet smoke to God. It surely is not a gross form of heathenism. May not He who in one age and land appointed burning incense as a mode of worship look with tender and pitying forbearance on such a mode of "feeling after him" by men who do not know how *near* he is to every one of us?

But I would speak of writing to God, with all our knowledge of him, in the full light of his written revelation. Why not write to him as well as speak to him? Why not address to him our confession, our adoration, our thanks, our petitions, with pen or pencil as simply and heartily as with our voices?

Dr. McCosh in his admirable early work on *The Divine Government* has an excellent passage on prayer, in which he urges the actual expression of our prayers in words—not, of course, because God needs such expression, but because we need it as a means of making our desires emerge from a dreamy vagueness into definite and vigorous reality. He well says that though the verbal utterance is “not the sacrifice,” it is “the cord which binds the sacrifice to the altar.” I dare say he would recognize written utterance of desire to God as of the same value and power.

It is possible that some readers may be a little startled by what I have thus written, having never conceived of the writing of a prayer as real praying, but only as the

shaping of a form in which somebody else is to pray afterward. The writing seems to them only a cool intellectual exercise, and I do not wonder that they dislike it. Something like this is the prejudice of some good people against written sermons. They imagine the minister simply exercising his intellect upon a piece of composition which he is to read next Sunday. They have not learned how a pastor writes at his desk, with his congregation before him, "in his mind's eye," as distinctly as he will see them on Sunday, and with all their needs in his heart stirring as fervent desire and love as when he and they are face to face in the sanctuary. Sermons are written thus in as fervent heat of devout and affectionate emotion as is ever felt in the delivery of a sermon, written or unwritten.

I have no doubt that the prayers which have been in print for ages, and which the Church will never let die, were originally uttered honestly and directly to God—not composed, with painstaking care, to be used afterward. This is true, no doubt equally, of the prayers in verse, such as "Jesus,

lover of my soul," "O God, our help in ages past," "My faith looks up to Thee," and of those which formed and fill the grand prose of the Litany and some of the Collects. Is it only men of rare genius—poets and masters of prose composition—who may write to God? As well might we say that only poets and orators should speak to him. The little girl who wrote to the queen the other day to tell her how glad she was that the wicked assassin did not kill her, got as gracious an answer as Gladstone's grandest rhetoric could have secured.

I wish every little girl and boy whom I know and care for would write to God every day. This is what I mean—not to try how fine or how good a prayer you can make up and put into writing, but to think of God just as you think of your father when he is away from home, or of any kind uncle or friend whom you cannot see just now, and to whom you really want to send some message of love or thanks or some request. You would take your paper and pen and write *just that*. So, if there really

is something which you would like to tell the Lord Jesus if you sat with him as Mary did in Bethany, or something you really wish him to do for you which you believe that he can do, I would have you take paper and a pen and write it to him. Do you ask me if he will read it? Yes, I am sure that he will. Perhaps some will ask, "Is it not just as well to speak it to him with our lips?" Yes, it is just as well, but I wish to show you that it is not any better, and that perhaps if you should do both ways it would more help you to learn to pray than doing only one. You need not show it to anybody; you need not keep it. Perhaps it is just as well to burn it; but if you do, I would have you *think* while it burns, just as you would not *thoughtlessly* burn a letter from a dear friend after reading it.

And would not mature Christians and ministers find *writing* to God, besides speaking to him, an additional and a good way of cultivating "the spirit and the gift of prayer"? I dare say that many use this means. But perhaps many do not, and I would be glad to get such to think of it. It may not

be the best way for all, but those who do not find it so will not object to others availing themselves of a means of grace which helps them.

## XXXI.

### “THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN.”

IF I could not be Paul himself, I hardly know who of all Paul's acquaintance I would rather have been than Luke, his companion in travel, his companion in his bonds, staying with him alone (2 Tim. 4:11) when others had left him—his “beloved physician.”

To account for his being *alone* with Paul at that solemn and trying time we do not need to charge unfaithfulness upon all who had been Paul's companions during his confinement in Rome; for, although he sadly says “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,” he does not oblige us to think that Crescens and Titus have gone away impelled by unworthy motives, and he says expressly that he *has sent* Tychicus to Ephesus. He also writes confidently to Timothy, urging him to “come to him



shortly," to "come before winter" and bring his "cloak which he left at Troas," and he counts on comfort from the kind and profitable ministering of Mark, whom he desires Timothy to bring with him.

No, Paul did not feel friendless then. Not only would the Lord be always with him, though all men should forsake him, but he knew many faithful men and women who loved him and remembered him and prayed for him. Yet it was with peculiar feeling that he wrote "Luke *alone* is with me" (Col. 4: 11).

Did Paul keep Luke there perhaps because he needed his *professional* care in his old age, after so many toils and so many hardships and exposures by land and by sea? Did Luke refuse to leave him because his watchful eye saw that Paul needed his professional care more than Paul knew or would willingly acknowledge? Had he the tact to conceal this professional solicitude under the equally true desire to enjoy Paul's company and instruction and to fill his own mind and memorandum-book with those memoirs which the Holy Spirit was

moving him to write to "most excellent Theophilus" and to us? I do not know how that was, but I have known physicians who possessed such gentle tact, and it went far to make them *beloved* physicians to those for whom they cared, especially to such cultured and susceptible souls as Paul.

If I might not be a minister of the gospel, a pastor taking care of souls, I know not what else I would rather be than a physician skilled to minister at bedsides and in chambers of the sick, worthy to be looked to by anxious households when the chill shadow of death makes them shudder, worthy to be trusted as a sentry by a community when the "pestilence walketh in darkness."

The highest skill in medicine is not all that such a trusted and beloved physician must have, or, rather, skill in a physician includes much more than knowledge of anatomy and physiology and the *materia medica*. It includes high acquaintance with the human soul in its peculiar powers and in their relations to the body. It involves not merely knowledge of the body as a thing which it has dissected, a machine

whose parts it has taken asunder and handled. It involves reverence for that body as the supreme handiwork of Jehovah, whose infinite skill and care are illustrated in all its joints and members, all its parts and organs, all its processes and powers. It involves tender appreciation of all the liabilities and capabilities of such a soul in such a body. It involves genuine sympathy with sufferers, suffusing and beautifying, not enfeebling nor hindering, the business of relieving, making it not less effective and successful business because clothed upon with graces which present it ever as intercourse, conversation, fellowship.

When I wrote (a few sentences back) “if I might not be a minister of the *gospel*,” I was just going to write “minister of *Christ*,” but my pen was held back from that word by this thought: May not the physician also, as well as the pastor, be a minister of Christ? What is ministry but service—service of honor and love? Did not Luke minister to Paul? And did not Christ, who notices and will reward every “cup of cold water” given to a disciple, accept that as

a ministering to him? And now, when a Christian physician, loving the Lord Jesus, comes beside the bed whereon you lie sick, or stands with you bending over the cradle in which your infant moans, or you follow him out from your sick wife's chamber to make anxious inquiry concerning her, could any other mortal have better opportunity to be a minister of Christ to you in the best and most sacred sense? What better opportunity has any pastor? There are beloved physicians who know their privilege and use it. God bless them and multiply them! Has not he given their professional brother Luke such eminent place in Holy Scripture and in the Christian history for their encouragement? Need any Christian physician now fail to be in the church to which he belongs, in the Christian mission of which he is a member, in the hospital through whose wards he makes his daily round, in many a household, to many a sufferer, to many a tempted, many an erring one, to little children, to youthful mothers, to the gray-haired and venerable, and to the robust supporters of the depend-

ent and feeble,—to all these just what Luke was to Paul, "*the beloved physician*"?

A Christian physician, called of God to be that, having made his vocation sure to his own mind by seasonably asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" has no need to feel that he is less favored, or must be less useful or is less privileged to live near to God, than if he had been called to the ministry of the word. To whatever department of his service God calls us, obeying that call, we can do most for him. In that, whatever it is, let us know ourselves "God's ministers, attending continually on that very thing."

## XXXII.

"THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN."

THEN the Sabbath is a permanent institution. The Sabbath law, rightly interpreted, is a law for all mankind. There are some who call it a Jewish institution, and consider that it vanished away with circumcision and the ritual of the temple and its bloody sacrifices. Jesus did not say anything of that sort. He said this very different thing: "The Sabbath was made for man"—not for the Jewish man, not for the Puritan man, not for the man of any one land or time, but for MAN, wherever and whenever he exists, in all lands and all times.

Is not this just what "the Lord of the Sabbath" might be expected to say, considering the reason which is annexed to the fourth commandment? According to that, the Sabbath was instituted, not to commem-

orate the exodus from Egypt, but to commemorate God's resting from his work of creation. The creation of the world was not an event of Jewish history and of only national significance. This magnificent frame of nature, which God so deliberately established, including not only these vast bulks of matter, but all these mighty and subtle and complex forces which modern science is so grandly disclosing and investigating,—this grand, marvelous *nature* is no narrow Jewish concern. The world was made for man; nature was contrived and instituted for mankind, and so also was the Sabbath.

The law of the Ten Commandments, thundered from Sinai and engraved on the two tables of stone, includes the formulated law of the Sabbath; but the Sabbath was not then instituted as a new thing, any more than the family was then first instituted by the fifth and seventh commandments. The family and the Sabbath were both instituted in Eden, in the beginning of human history, when Adam recognized the "help meet for him" whom God had made of his own bone and flesh, and when



God "rested from all his work which he had made." The fifth and seventh commandments enunciate rules of filial and conjugal behavior which have been recognized and enforced in the world's history from the beginning; and the fourth commandment does not introduce a new thing, but calls men to remember a thing well known before.

Then the Sabbath is a divine institution. We sometimes hear it spoken of as a "Mosaic institution." This is not a denial that it is divine if those who use the expression acknowledge the "divine legation" and inspiration of Moses. The writings of Moses which we have are the word of God. Whatever Moses enjoined by God's authority is of divine institution. But it is important to keep this in mind, and to guard against speaking or thinking of what Moses delivered or instituted as if it had only the authority of "the man Moses." Besides this, Moses did not institute the Sabbath in any sense. He recognized it as an institution which had existed ages before he was born, or rather Moses received from God his recognition of it, graven in stone, and God's

solemn charge to "*remember* it and keep it *holy*." No lower authority than that of God is competent to establish any institution for *man*, for all mankind. No human authority has ever reached so far. "The Lord of the Sabbath must be the Lord of the race, Lord of the world, Lord of nature and creation."

The Sabbath is a benevolent institution. It is not a severe restriction upon human liberty; it is a benefit conferred upon man. When Christ affirmed that "the Sabbath was made for man," no one can suppose him to have meant less than that it was made for the good of man. Can any one believe that Jesus regarded the Sabbath of the Old Testament, the Sabbath of Sinai and of Eden, as one of the evils from which he came to deliver mankind? He claimed that the Sabbath is a good gift of God to mankind—that the Sabbath law, rightly understood and kept, is a blessing to all who so keep it.

Then all mankind have a *right* to the Sabbath.

Is there any other so sure basis for human rights as divine institution? "We hold

these truths to be self-evident—that all mankind are created equal, and are *endowed by their Creator* with certain inalienable rights.” By whom else could they be so endowed? “Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness,” if God conferred these upon men as such—not upon rich men, not upon men of aristocratic blood, not upon white men, but upon men, all mankind—then all men have a right to them. Notice how this right is guaranteed in the fourth commandment: “Thou, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.” You are not permitted to enjoy the Sabbath rest yourself and exact labor on that day from men and women in your employ—no, nor from your beasts of burden. The ox and horse have rights which their human owners are bound to respect. How much more the humble human laborers dependent on their wages for sustenance! One of the most cruel organized wrongs now oppressing large classes of our countrymen is the driving them to labor continuously—seven days in the week—by our great corporations, especially the rail-

road companies and the United States government in its post-office business. Railroad engineers and conductors and brakemen, mail-agents and post-office clerks,—all have a right to Sabbath rest as well as other men.

It is possible to spoil the Sabbath by excessive rigidity in the observance of it. This had happened in our Lord's time under the teaching of the Pharisees. We have a specimen of this in their fault-finding about those ears of corn, and other specimens in their daring to criticise Christ's miracles of healing wrought on the Sabbath Day. What amazing stupidity was that which prevented them from seeing that He who could do such miracles was indeed Lord of the Sabbath! Showing himself the Lord of nature, whose forces obeyed him as Roman soldiers obeyed their centurion, he is no doubt their Lord, and they would do well humbly to take their interpretation of the law from his conduct, rather than impudently assume to regulate his conduct by their interpretation of the law.

If he had abolished the Sabbath, releasing

all mankind from its restriction and depriving all mankind of its privileges, who could question the validity of that abolishment? What effect would this have had upon human society? Especially what effect would it have had upon laboring people? The Lord of the Sabbath did no such thing. What did he do? He healed some sick people on the Sabbath. He insisted that reaching out your hand to some ears of wheat growing beside the path, rubbing them in your hands and eating the kernels, is not a violation of the Sabbath law. He approved of helping a dumb animal out of a ditch into which it has fallen on the Sabbath. This comes about as near to repealing the fourth commandment as the liberty to eat a handful of your neighbor's grain when walking hungry through his fields is to repeal the eighth commandment. The Lord of the Sabbath did not abolish it. He did not repeal the fourth commandment. He did not even amend it. He blew away the pharisaic nonsense about it, and left it in its primitive holiness and its primitive beneficence.

There is nothing in our Lord's words or his recorded examples which gives any countenance to the idea of changing the weekly holy day into a secular holiday, of making it anything else than a day of *holy* rest.

Reader, if the Lord of the Sabbath were here, walking our streets as of old he walked the streets of Capernaum and Bethany, if he were your guest over a Sabbath Day, would it be pharisaical rigidness of Sabbath observance which he would find occasion to correct? The Lord of the Sabbath is here. Beware!

### XXXIII.

"CAST A HOOK."

WHEN Christ called Simon and Andrew from their customary employment to become his followers, he promised to make them "fishers of men." Thus he took their previous occupation to illustrate the work for which he would now train them and to which he would afterward send them. On another occasion, recorded by Luke, he made use of the same figure, varying the form of expression, saying to Simon, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

We readily understand that the illustration is intended to apply only to one side of the subject. Men are not to be *caught* to their harm and for the benefit of the fisher. They are to be diligently sought, patiently won, that they may be rescued and saved.

The methods of the fisherman, and the



qualities and habits of mind which are necessary to his success, are strikingly analogous to those of the winner of souls, the "fisher of men."

This illustration is most frequently presented with reference to fishing with a net and gathering a great multitude of fishes at once. This is an obvious and just application of it, but ought we not also to consider it with reference to fishing with a hook for one fish at a time?

This method was not unknown to the Galilean fishermen, for it was thus that Simon Peter took the fish with the piece of money in its mouth. This method of fishing (angling), as it is pursued along the margin of rivers, in boats out upon lake or sound, and especially along mountain-brooks in which the shy trout lurks, is specially interesting, because it taxes and trains the ingenuity, the self-control, the patience of the angler. There may be more tact and perseverance demanded to catch one speckled swimmer from the crystal brook than to fill a net from the dark deep.

The angler studies the habits and disposition of the fish he is seeking. He reads books which treat of it; he makes careful observations for himself; he watches attentively and studies diligently to become as well acquainted as he can with the object of his search. Whatever knowledge he thus studiously gains, he carefully and patiently applies. You shall see him creeping very cautiously along the bank, careful not to jostle a stone nor break a dry stick, nor let his own shadow fall too suddenly across the still pool in the bend of the stream. You shall see him lie at full length upon the turf, gently moving his hook over the edge of the bank into the water, and waiting patiently for hours till the fish shall swim by or till the fish swimming thereabout shall become accustomed to the sight of the bait and lose his fear of it, or till hunger shall prompt him to swallow it. Then the angler draws him forth and goes away contented, for he carries home what will furnish his family a delicious meal, peradventure a needed delicacy for a suffering invalid dear to him. It was something rare and precious

for which he so skillfully sought and so patiently waited.

We have seen similar skill and studiousness and patience practiced by a teacher for a wayward, reckless, perverse pupil, counting no painstaking too much, no careful study too laborious, no waiting and watching too long, if at last he could be rescued from indolence, from mischief, from folly, from his own manifold perverseness. We have seen a wise nurse watch and wait and control herself, suppressing all her fears, keeping her eye light, her voice soft and mild and her whole manner calm and even that she might at last bring back the mind of her patient from its delirium, and restore him to himself. So also have we seen a mother or a wife or a sister—sometimes a daughter—bearing patiently, on a sore heart, the anxiety tinged with shame which a dear but cruel one inflicts by his selfish indulgence. If only she can at last save him, she will count no careful study of him, no skillful adaptation of herself to him, no patient bearing with him, too great a price for the joy that will then enrich her.

Such patient and watchful effort is not confined to one sex. There are manly hearts that carry solicitudes as tender as the heart of any woman.

Is anything more Christ-like than such watching unto prayer and such persistence in study and care and delicate endeavor for a single soul, to lead souls, one by one, to Jesus?

Should this kind of Christian work be disparaged in comparison with that which we do in crowds, by organizations, by conventions, and in methods which are fully open to public observation?

Need we doubt that now, in our land, in families, in schools, in congregations, much of such Christian work is silently done, unseen by men, unheralded, unreported, unrecorded except in that "Book of Remembrance" which is written before the Lord?

It has seemed to me that in published statements and reports of Christian work, and public appeals in behalf of it, not enough account is taken of those kinds of Christian work which must be done privately and quietly, in which men and women

may be very diligently engaged without becoming much known as "Christian workers." There really is a good deal of Christian work that can be so done that "the left hand will not know what the right hand doeth." I think that anxious pastors and other anxious watchers in Zion may properly be comforted by the probability that a good deal of such work is done of which they know nothing.

But doubtless there is a great deal more of such work which somebody ought to be doing. Many Christians need encouragement more than they need stimulus to such work. They need to be kindly assured that they can do it, rather than vehemently assured that they ought to do it, or harshly censured for not having done it. Timid, bashful reader, frightened by harsh voices and reproachful words, listen now to the gentle voice which says, "Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men." You know that voice. Can you resist its persuasion? "Follow him." Do you not see him? Then look for his footsteps. He "went about doing good." Ask him in your next prayer

to help you see where and to whom you can do any good—good of whatever kind, good to the body or good to the soul, a loaf of bread, a warm garment, a load of coal or wood, an orange for lips dry with fever, a bunch of flowers for the eyes and nostrils of some weary invalid or the sad inmate of some prison-cell or some retreat for the insane. Surely there is some one whom you can find for whom you can do something, at least some such little thing, “a cup of cold water” for the sake of Christ, silently understood between him and you as his service. Begin to follow him so simply, and simply keep on, and he will make you to become a fisher of men. He will teach you how to find, to reach and to win souls. If you should win only one, the consciousness of having done it will be a joy to you “millions of ages hence.” But it is very likely you may win a considerable number. If you go quietly, humbly, prayerfully and diligently about such work, and keep on in it, “your labor shall not be in vain.” The sympathizing Master will see every effort you make. He will know just how much



it costs you. He will appreciate all. No matter, then, whether the world know you. Quite as well if they do not. You need not envy those who are called to more public and more conspicuous work. And you must not judge them as if they loved that publicity. To more of them than you think that is the cross they are bearing. Such seclusion as is granted you would be a haven of rest to them. Every one, where the Master puts him, let him work for the Master. But is it not pitiable, is it not dreadful, not to be doing anything for Christ, neither helping to draw the net nor going alone to cast the hook?



## XXXIV.

### THE BURDEN DROPPED ENTIRELY.

I WAS sitting alone in my study when a lady called whom I had never seen. Introducing herself politely, she informed me that she had called on behalf of a woman living at No. — M—— street, whose husband was evidently in an advanced stage of pulmonary consumption and was very irreligious. The wife could not bear to have him die without any Christian speaking to him in regard to the want and peril of his soul, but she desired not to have him know that she had sent for a minister, as it would probably enrage him. It seemed a difficult affair to manage, and yet evidently it must not be neglected. It was a plain call of God to preach the gospel to the fellow-man, “whether he would hear or whether he would forbear.” It was evidently a fit occasion for endeavoring to help a woman

under an unusual burden of womanly anxiety. It was a case in which it was impossible not to feel deeply one's dependence on the providence and the Spirit of God for all hope of success.

I repaired immediately to the place indicated. The house fronted directly upon the pavement, and the front door opened directly into the principal room, in which stood the patient's bed and in which his wife was busily occupied. Much to my relief, he himself was not there. Feeble though he was, he was able to walk a short distance and then ride a few miles in a street-car, thus enjoying the fresh air of a fine morning.

This favorable providential ordering gave me a good opportunity to converse with his wife and become better acquainted with his circumstances and antecedents before meeting the man. She told me that he and she had once been members of a church, but that for twelve years neither of them had been within a place of worship. Her husband was a gambler, and everything else that a gambler is apt to be. He had not

been more faithful to her than to God. They had been alienated from each other and separated for years. But now, broken in health, needing the care and nursing which no other could give, he had asked to be taken home to her. She had consented, and would do all she could for his comfort and welfare while life should last and (if anything were possible) for his safety beyond death. She frankly confessed her own religious delinquency along with her husband's, and did not seem disposed to cast any unnecessary reproach upon him.

After a little while the street-car in which he had made a circuit stopped at his door, and he soon entered. He was of a slight figure, perhaps five feet and eight or nine inches in height, and quite slender, now made more light and fragile by the slow wasting of his disease. He had light hair and eyes, a bright and pleasant countenance, and his manners were altogether easy and gentlemanly.

Not choosing to announce myself as a minister, I rose as he entered, offered him my hand, gave him my name, told him that

I was his neighbor, and, hearing of his sickness, had come to see him. He responded politely, welcomed me cordially, requested me to be seated, and took his own seat with evident gratification at my neighborly attention. After a little miscellaneous conversation I alluded to his evident prospect of finishing his earthly life before long, and inquired as to his readiness for that. He was already too decisively committed to gentlemanly treatment of me to repel me as his wife had feared. Perhaps also God had been preparing him within for what he had providentially so favorably arranged without. Nevertheless, my first allusion to his spiritual state brought a cloud over his face which was not far from a frown, and he let me plainly see that that subject was unwelcome and conversation upon it quite irksome.

Unwilling to risk making it impossible to repeat my visit, and not thinking it wise, at any rate, to fatigue or worry him, I soon rose to leave, expressing kind wishes and asking if he would like to have me come in again. His response was cordial and

his invitation to visit him again evidently sincere.

I did not allow many days to pass before repeating my visit. He welcomed me cordially, and with me as cordially a brother accompanying me, the superintendent of a mission Sabbath-school in which two children of the sick man were pupils. He was evidently glad to see us, and ever after not only was not unwilling, but was solemnly eager, to talk about the gospel and his own brief opportunity to secure its offered benefit. In one of my visits, not late in the forenoon, I found him very eagerly reading the New Testament. He had already read twelve chapters that morning. It seemed new to him, and deeply interesting. His manner was intensely solemn. He said that I could hardly have an idea how wicked a man he was, and how vile and hateful a life he had lived. He wanted to tell me all, but had not strength then to control the distressing emotion which such a review would awaken. I assured him that any such recital was quite unnecessary. I was no father confessor. I neither demanded

nor asked that he should disclose to me the sins of which he was guilty. He had only to confess them to God and to any fellow-creatures who had been wronged by him (if that was practicable), and I was fully authorized by Holy Scripture to assure him that whatever his sins might be, the blood of Christ was able to cleanse him from all. In Christ's own name and by his authority, as his commissioned ambassador, I offered him, then and there, full pardon and absolution for all his sins of whatever enormity, and without needing or caring myself to know what they were, if only he honestly and penitently confessed them to God, heartily renounced them and believingly laid the burden of them on the Lamb of God, who was able and willing to bear them.

He assured me that he fully believed what I said, and that he understood the gospel in that way. He did not feel obliged to confess to me, but it would be a relief to his mind to tell me all whenever he should feel strong enough to do so. In this view I consented, on a subsequent day,



to hear his self-accusing story ; and truly it was a sad one. He had indeed forfeited all claim to good standing in society and all claim to the confidence or love of the wife, who was now faithfully and tenderly nursing him, helping him down as gently as she could to the grave.

I could not hesitate to repeat my assurance that still the blood of Christ could cleanse from all that pollution. I reiterated the Lord's own offer of free and full pardon, and the guilty man promptly accepted it. Very speedily the gloom left his face and his voice and his whole manner. Very soon he became quite cheerful and happy. So entirely free from any burden did he appear that I became troubled for him. I did not see how he could be so untroubled after such a career if he had an adequate sense of its enormity. I questioned whether I had been faithful and thorough enough with him, whether I had probed the wound duly before pouring in the healing oil, whether I had taken due care that he should know and feel for what he needed pardoning mercy.



Revolving such thoughts as these, and dreading the mistake of healing a soul's hurt slightly, dreading to let him go into eternity, there to find that he had come short of a true repentance, I sought an interview with him and tenderly but plainly told him all that I feared. He listened attentively, as he always did, and, as soon as he began to see the purport of my communication his old look of pain and shame stole over his face; yet not quite the same look: his features grew rigid, the red veins swelled visibly in his eyes, his look became one of intense suffering. When I ceased speaking he replied, "Did you not tell me that, confessing my sins to God, I was forgiven? Did you not say that I might cast all that burden on my Saviour, who offers to take it and is able and willing to bear it? Must I still bear that crushing load? I thought it was taken off by my Saviour, and that I was quite right to let it all go. Have I misunderstood you? Have I misunderstood the gospel? Have I misunderstood Christ?"

It was enough. I hastened to reassure

the penitent, to encourage the believer, to restore his complete rest and peace and joy in Christ. I hope that I effectually learned never again to go back on the gospel.

## XXXV.

### THE LION-LAMB.

WHEN John, in the Apocalypse, wept at the vision of that awful book the seals of which no one was found worthy to open, his grief was soothed by the assurance that "the lion of the tribe of Judah" was equal to that great undertaking.

The dying Jacob, when declaring the future of their offspring to his sons, the heads of the tribes, made the lion the emblem of Judah, the regal tribe from which the sceptre should not depart "until Shiloh come." Everywhere and always among mankind the lion is regarded as the fit emblem of strength, of majesty, of royal dominion. No speaker would ever need to explain his figure who should speak of any heroic man as a lion or as a lion-like man.

When John had been comforted by the assurance that the seals of the mysterious

book should be opened by Judah's lion, for what appearance did he look? Of what form and aspect should be the grand being whom one of the elders thus designated and declared able to do what no other "in heaven nor in earth nor under the earth" could do? John was already familiar with symbolic language and figures. He would probably expect to see some human or angelic figure, erect and strong, majestic in stature, glorious in apparel, and of a countenance glowing with the look of heroic fortitude and kingly authority. Many years before John had seen the Lord Jesus transfigured, "his face shining as the sun, and his raiment white as the light," and had fallen to the ground overpowered by the glorious vision. Very recently, on that "Lord's Day" upon Patmos, he had seen him again, clothed with kingly garments, his eyes as a flame of fire, his very feet burning with awful splendor, and his countenance as the sun shining in his strength, while his voice was "as the sound of many waters."

Naturally, John would look to see "the

lion of the tribe of Judah" in some such form of visible glory and power. He looks to the centre of divine manifestation, toward the throne already revealed (Rev. 4 : 2, 3), on which He who sat "was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone," and round about which was "a rainbow in sight like unto an emerald"—around which also bowed in adoration the four-and-twenty elders and those four mysterious cherubic beings "full of eyes" and with faces symbolic of power and patience and swiftness and wisdom. He looks, but lo! in the midst of these he beholds One in whom power reposes in such serenity, in whom majesty is veiled in such meekness, and whose whole aspect and expression are so eloquent of past anguish replaced by infinite satisfaction, that he feels himself gazing not upon Judah's lion, but upon "the Lamb of God."

John, to whom this vision was vouchsafed, was standing, we reasonably believe (John 1 : 40), at the Jordan when Jesus came thither for his baptism. He had looked upon him "as he walked," when the great

Baptizer had exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" John had reclined beside the Lord at the Last Supper and had "leaned on his breast;" John had stood near the cross of Jesus, and heard his last words, and led his mother away from that awful scene "unto his own home," her soul pierced with the sword of maternal anguish. No one better than John knew the aspect of "the Lamb that was slain," the Lamb "that taketh away the sin of the world." To John that infinite meekness and that infinite majesty were not inconsistent. He could see them both in the face of his beloved Lord.

Scourged, blood-stained, pinioned, pale, stooping under the timber on which he was to be "lifted up," John had seen them lead him "as a lamb to the slaughter." Returned from the sepulchre, having "abolished death," "leading captivity captive," calmly claiming "all power in heaven and earth," John had seen him ascend from Olivet and disappear in the heavens. To the memory, the love and the prophetic vision of John, Jesus meekly submitting to

the judgment of Pilate and Jesus enthroned on the clouds of heaven, with his mighty angels coming to judgment, Jesus the Lamb and Jesus the Lion, Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus Jehovah, were ever one and the same wonderful person—inexplicable, incomprehensible, adorable, “the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.”

The visions which John saw upon Patmos he was directed to write, not only for the seven churches of Asia, but for all the churches of Christ throughout all the world and for all who call on the name of Jesus.

Reverently reading this book to-day, awed by its yet unsealed mysteries and comforted by its blessed assurances, there is vouchsafed to us some spiritual beholding of these “visions of God.”

We are privileged to look not backward only, but forward and upward also. We remember our Lord upon the cross; we behold him “in the midst of the throne and the elders and the four living beings.” But there we behold him still as the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain.

Lo! he has taken the mystic volume and



is breaking its awful seals. As the volume unrolls from his hand we find ourselves not able yet to understand its disclosures. The white horse, on which a crowned one rides forth conquering and to conquer; the red horse, whose rider is empowered to take peace from the earth; the black horse, whose rider holds forth "a pair of balances in his stern, steady hands;" the pale horse, upon which death sits and whom hell follows; the souls of the martyrs seen under the altar, "slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held," and their plaintive cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our death?" "the white robes given unto every one of them;" the great earthquake; the sun blackened "as sackcloth of hair;" the stars falling like untimely figs from the wind-shaken fig tree; the mountains and islands moving out of their places, and the very heavens rolled together and departing as a scroll shriveling in flame; and kings of earth and weak men and rich men and chief captains and mighty men and bondmen and free men hiding themselves in dens and rocks of the

mountains,—how should we expect, from this point of view and with our feeble vision, to comprehend all these? Why need we wonder that all who have essayed the complete and minute exposition of them have so lamentably failed to satisfy us?

Let us sit in the reverent silence to which all heaven is hushed at the opening of the seventh seal. Let our eyes pass from those appalling visions to the beautiful angel standing by the altar with his golden censer, and let our believing prayers ascend up with the smoke of the incense which he offers with the prayers of the saints. Let us also prepare our hearts, that we may join in the new song wherewith they greet the Lion-Lamb: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”

## XXXVI.

### JOHN'S EMBASSY TO JESUS.

AT the Jordan, John had given very clear and explicit testimony to Jesus that he was the Christ of Old-Testament prophecy.

In prison afterward how was it that he needed to send two of his disciples to him to ask him whether indeed he was "He that should come"?

Some have assumed that this was for the sake of his disciples, and not for his own sake—to assure their faith by a personal interview with the Lord more strongly than he found his own testimony able to assure it.

That John wished thus to help his disciples seems probable. We know that he wished them to trust in Jesus, and not in himself. But I cannot help thinking that John himself was also just then needing

help for the satisfaction and support of his own mind. Great as John was, "a prophet and more than a prophet," he was still human. We have no warrant for assuming that he was exempt from ordinary human weakness. If his faith needed bracing there in prison, it is not more strange than that the heart of the Old-Testament Elijah once failed him so that he "sat down under a juniper tree, and requested that he might die," murmuring, with absurd exaggeration, "They have slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away," while yet there were seven thousand true worshipers of Jehovah in Israel.

It is not necessary nor right to assume that John knew all about Jesus that we now know. "The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." When he recognized Jesus and attested him as the Christ, we have no means of knowing exactly what expectations he entertained concerning the coming of "the kingdom of heaven," which he declared to be "at hand." His preaching repentance (a change of mind), and his

pointing to Jesus as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," seem to show that he had worthy and right views of a spiritual salvation. But it is not necessary to suppose that his mind was wholly free from the prevalent Jewish expectation of a temporal deliverance and of a Messiah setting up a mighty and glorious earthly kingdom. Even the apostles did not get rid of this notion all the three years of their walking with Jesus until they had seen him go up from Olivet. Why should we assume that John the Baptist's mind was wholly free from that misconception?

If John had expected Jesus soon to come forth with demonstration of his glory and power, conclusively to all the nation and irresistibly to imperial Rome, his faith must have been severely tried in that prison. "If Jesus is what I was ordered to proclaim him, will he not rescue me from Herod and rescue my country from Roman tyranny? Having accepted my baptism and my testimony to his Messiahship, does he forget me and leave me here to Herodias's malignity?"

It seems to me not unlikely that John had

some such misgivings, and needed some help to his faith. Good men, the very best of men, are sometimes placed in situations which severely try their faith. Sometimes they are left in such situations a discouragingly long time. It does not prove that they are not true children of God if sometimes they need help to sustain themselves in steady faith. It may help them and comfort them to study this trying experience of John.

There is no better thing for such tried souls than just to apply to the Lord Jesus for the help which they need. They cannot go to him bodily nor send messengers who may audibly talk with him. Do they need to do that *now* after all these centuries of experience and testimony of those who have trusted him? Have not we the answer which he sent back to John? Was not this its import?—"Judge for yourself, my friend, whether He who does such things as your messengers will report to you is the Messiah, and whether you cannot *trust* him." Has not that answer been gathering force, cumulatively, all these ages?

“Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart—*wait*, I say, on the Lord.” “Surely I come *quickly*,” he did indeed say a great while ago. It seems a great while now, but when we look back upon it from the midst of the future glory, “millions of ages hence” doubtless it will seem only “a little while.” Then we shall thankfully confess that truly he did “come quickly.” “Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.”



## XXXVII.

### "THE GOD OF HOPE."

HAVE you noticed this scriptural designation of God? Have you noticed that it occurs in the writings of Paul—that same Paul who wrote those high and awful things about predestination from which theologians have elaborated the Calvinistic confessions? Doubtless it is quite possible that uninspired men and councils and assemblies of uninspired men, elaborating such creeds or confessions, may have put into them harsher and more forbidding forms of expression than would best convey the truth to average minds. It is right for us to keep in mind that these symbols are not our rule of faith, but human, though devout, expositions of that rule. We must perpetually test them, as all human utterances, by the infallible word of God.

What I notice is, that the most amply in-

spired expounder of God's sovereignty and of his eternal foreordination is the same who calls him "the God of *hope*" (Rom. 15:13). I have known some serious persons who had been taught, or had wrought out for themselves, a theology which shut them up to a view of God which would be more truly expressed by calling him the God of despair. Such "bruised reeds" need to be lifted up from their drooping by the cheery tone in which the very apostle of predestination speaks to them of "the God of hope."

I have just been reading the *Life of Charles Hodge*, the theological teacher of more living Presbyterian ministers than any man, and whose *Systematic Theology* is probably now studied by more ministers and students than any other work of the kind. There are some features of the system of which my own mind does not accept Dr. Hodge's exposition. They have been somewhat differently expounded in our several theological schools, while the men taught and teaching in all these schools cordially regard one another as holding alike

all the essentials of the system. What I wish to say of Dr. Hodge is, that while he has been regarded as especially emphasizing the sterner and more severe aspects of the Calvinistic theology, and as expounding some of its hard things in not the most "acceptable words," yet his faithful biography shows him to have been as eminent for kindness of heart and sweetness of disposition and genial hopefulness as for keenness and strength of intellect and for brave persistence in asserting and defending the truth as he understood it. His solemn, stern Calvinism made him neither hard-hearted nor gloomy. No man has lately died for whom more living men and women have wept with a right filial love than Dr. Charles Hodge.

Now, Dr. Hodge's study and labor, for a great part of his long life, were upon the writings of Paul. All his elaborate system of theology is deduced from his exposition of those writings. Unless he understood and expounded Paul rightly, then, he would say, his life-work was a failure. It is worth while to take notice how such lifelong study

of Paul, such intimate association with Paul, affects a man's character and disposition. Still more to the purpose is it to notice how the views which Paul held affected his own mind—what spirit and temper they wrought in him. Study Paul's writings, and Luke's biographical notices of him in the Acts, with this in view, to find what manner of man Paul was and more and more became, as his character matured and ripened under the influence of that theology which he held and taught—which the Holy Spirit reveals to us by him. Was that a very stern, harsh, unsympathizing man who wrote, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," and a hundred other as warm and cheery and sweet passages?

God was to Paul not the God of gloom and despondency, but the "God of hope;" and he believed that a true view of God would enable believers to "*abound* in hope." He also expects believers, by reason of their believing, to be "filled with joy and peace."

To believe is to *trust*. To believe is "to

accept Christ as he is freely offered to us in the gospel." Why should not this fill the soul with peace and joy?

How is it that so many suppose experimental Christianity to be joyless?—especially that type of experimental Christianity which is the product of deep and solemn conviction of the truths which characterize the teaching of Paul as evidently as they do that of Hodge or Calvin? In reality, there is no other joy so deep as that which comes of being consciously in peace and harmony with the holy Sovereign "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways." I find it printed of two godly laymen whom I knew as old men when I was a youth, "Those grave, thoughtful men were happy." They were, I suppose, good specimens of the Puritan; and if they were, those who call the Puritans "vinegar-faced," or imagine them gloomy or hard-hearted, are greatly mistaken. Their joy was as deep as their character and as high as their faith and as steadfast as that blessed hope which anchored their redeemed souls. They believed in the sovereign, holy God, and re-

joiced in his holy sovereignty. They believed in the divine-human Redeemer, and had peace with God through him. They loved his church, his house, his book, his day and every one of his people. That is a sober joy, but it is a real joy. It is very unlike "the crackling of thorns under a pot" to which the Bible proverb likens "the laughter of fools," which is about all there is of a good deal that many chase after, mistaking it for joy. How much better this Christian joy is! How much longer it lasts! It is a deep "well of water springing up unto everlasting life."

## XXXVIII.

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

WE may use the word "kingdom" to denote the peopled territory over which a king bears rule or to denote the authority which he has over such a territory. There is another use of the word "kingdom." We speak of the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom and the mineral kingdom. We thus classify substances. A piece of granite, of marble, of iron ore, of coal,—either of these you would call a mineral. A scientific treatise will speak of these as "inorganic bodies having a definite chemical composition." Certain material elements take form in a definite way. The forces which construct them act uniformly, so that we can understand them as acting according to a law. We do understand those forces as both originated and regulated under law by a skillful, powerful mind,



a living, thinking Creator, who makes them act uniformly. He is intelligent about it; those forces are neither intelligent nor voluntary. In calling this regulation of material forces law, we give the term "law" a slight deflection from the meaning which it has when the subjects of law are intelligent and voluntary. We speak of the laws of nature, meaning the Creator's wise regulation of the forces of nature.

What is a plant more than a mineral? It is "an organized body." It not only has a definite form and chemical composition, but it has organs, and it grows by means of nutrition through its organs. Each species does this according to the law for it made and provided.

You speak of vegetable life, but never of mineral life. You say, "Those trees are alive." You never say that a stone is alive. When you say that a tree is alive, you do not mean all that you mean when you say that a horse or a man is alive. But you mean a great deal by saying that a tree or a plant is alive. A live tree differs from a dead tree as evidently as a live man from

a dead man. A dead tree will not grow nor produce leaves nor blossoms nor fruit; a living tree will. But it must do so in a particular way, according to the law which God has made for it, "bearing fruit after its kind." The rose and the lily will never bloom alike, nor the peach tree bear pears, nor the cherry tree apples. All vegetables grow and bloom and bear fruit or seed according to their laws.

An animal is of a higher order of being than either a mineral or a vegetable. It is not only organized and capable of growing and of propagating its kind, but it has sensation and voluntary motion. It walks about; it feels as the plant cannot. It is alive, with a higher and larger life.

Why do we call these three different departments of being "kingdoms"? On account of their being systems under law. We do not imagine them as ruled by three different kings, but we do think of them as different systems, each regulated by its own peculiar laws.

A body cannot be transferred from one of these kingdoms to the other without a

change of its nature—such a change as no human power can accomplish.

The Lord taught Nicodemus that a man does not come into that spiritual state in which he can be classified as belonging to the kingdom of God by any process of education or discipline. More is necessary than human culture and training—something greater, deeper, more radical. You might as well try to cultivate a plant till it can feel, transferring it from the vegetable kingdom to the animal kingdom, as to try to educate a human soul out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God.

The Lord taught Nicodemus that a man cannot be classified as belonging to the kingdom of God by simply submitting to any religious rite to be performed on him by a priest. You might as well undertake to wash a stone until it will grow and blossom and bear fruit—wash it out of the mineral kingdom into the vegetable kingdom.

In order to a man's being transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God there must be a thorough and

radical change wrought in him, making him a different man from what he was before, "a new creature." Each of us is human by reason of his birth from human parents, transmitting their own common nature according to the law of inheritance under which God created mankind. All essential human characteristics belong to each of us, because we have all been born of human parents.

Hence there is no way of expressing more strongly the idea of being essentially different from what we are than by supposing us to have been differently born. This would be a radical difference—a difference proceeding from the very root of our being.

Our Lord spoke to Nicodemus of a change so deep, so thorough, so radical, that he called it being born again, generated anew, regenerated, reconstructed from the very foundation of being.

He did not explain the mode of this change. It is still a mystery. But every human being who, penitent for sin, accepts Jesus Christ for his Saviour, is born again.

“For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1 : 12). Surely to become a child of God is nothing else than to be born of God, and thus brought into his kingdom.

## XXXIX.

### THE LORD'S MARTYRS.

**I**N that memorable interview of Paul with his Lord in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 22 : 17-21) he said, "And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

It is not of Paul's touching humility and penitence here exhibited I would now speak, but of that significant phrase by which he describes the victim of that persecuting frenzy—"thy martyr Stephen."

We shall the better appreciate its significance if we revert to the derivation and the primary meaning of our word "martyr." In the Greek language, in which this account was written, the word here rendered "martyr" is the same which in its plural form is rendered "witnesses" in the same

writer's account of the slaying of Stephen (Acts 7 : 58): "The *witnesses* laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." In that language a *martyr* (μάρτυρός) means simply a witness. Even maliciously false witnesses, like those whose testimony shed Stephen's blood, were called martyrs (μάρτυρες). A witness is one who testifies or *tells what he knows*. Usually, it is in order to furnish to a judicial tribunal the facts which are to be the basis of its judgment. So it was in the case of the witnesses against Stephen. There are few acts in human life and experience which involve more serious responsibility. No wonder that it has so eminent a place in one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." It is suitable that witnesses be put under oath—*i. e.* made to avow their recollection that they are giving their testimony in the presence of God. The Old-Testament form of oath, "The Lord do so unto me, and more also," is not too solemn an appeal to Jehovah, nor is our own "*So help me God.*"



If it is a solemn thing to testify before a human court for or against a fellow-man, if it behooves such a witness to recollect that he is in the presence and hearing of God, it surely is not less solemn to be a witness for God unto mankind. Such were the apostles, such was Stephen: "Thy witness (μάρτυρός) Stephen."

But Stephen's honest testimony cost him his life, and he was the first in a "noble army of witnesses" who have laid down their lives for the same truth which he thus testified. So, in our Christian vocabulary, we have set apart that word *martyr* (μάρτυρός) to signify not merely one who tells the truth, but tells it at the cost of his life.

The martyrs, the men and women who have borne testimony to the Christian truth, and adhered to it steadfastly when they knew that they must die horrible deaths for it, are not only held in peculiar honor, but loved with a peculiar love. What Christian does not love Stephen and Huss and the unnamed multitude "whose bones lie bleaching on the Alpine mountains cold,"

and whose blood was shed within the Scottish glens?

Does not the Lord love them? Will he to all eternity forget what they have borne for him?

How well Paul knew the heart of his Master! Himself so marvelously changed from a slayer of the witnesses into a witness ready to be slain, he understands both sides of the experience. His penitence gives pathos to his affectionate allusion, "Thy martyr Stephen." He knew no dearer title to give to that slain disciple; his whole life showed that he knew none more honorable to which he himself could now aspire.

It is not likely now to cost us our lives to be the Lord's true witnesses. Yet it may cost us what is quite as hard to give up. I say it deliberately. There will some men and women read this who have testified for the Lord, and stood to their testimony, at the cost of being misunderstood, despised, hated by some whose love and respect they would by no means have forfeited to save their own lives. Some of

them have been compelled to give bitter pain to those dear to them—so dear that they would never hesitate a moment to expose their lives for them. Others will read this who are in situations which try their fidelity in the same way. They will have to choose between being true to their Lord and suffering what they would not to save their lives. Will it not help them to reflect that thus they will be “the Lord’s martyrs” just as truly as they who have been stoned, sawn asunder, torn of beasts or burned? “The noble army of martyrs” is already a very great army, and its ranks are not yet full. In spirit, in heart, in affectionate, brave readiness to suffer for his name and his truth, every one of us may be a martyr of the Lord as dear to him as Stephen.

## XL.

### CONVICTION OF SIN.

“THERE is very little sense of sin shown. Dr. — takes it for granted that we know and feel that we are sinners, and therefore need salvation. I suppose he is right in this; still, I confess I should feel better if I saw more deep conviction of sin. Are we to suppose that, if we follow Christ’s method of preaching, it will be sufficient unless John the Baptist goes before awakening the conscience? Is it want of faith in the power of Christ’s words and free invitations that makes me shrink from some of the quiet acceptances, and fear that they are only on the surface? That souls are being saved I have no doubt, but I see few or none that seem to take the kingdom of heaven by force.”

The foregoing remarks are contained in a letter from an earnest and judicious pas-

tor, some of whose people are seeking salvation, and who is properly anxious that they may "make sure work for eternity." I am moved to make some responsive suggestions.

1. Genuine conversion is not to be expected without real conviction of sin. "They that be whole have no need of the physician." They who feel well do not send for the doctor; they who are not convinced that they are sinners do not seek Jesus as a Saviour from sin. They may admire him; they may like him; they may have a sentimental fondness for him, which they will love to utter in hymns full of tender phrases; but not as a deliverer from sin and from a deserved perdition do they accept him.

2. There may be real conviction of sin where "there is very little sense of sin shown." Our civilization and education put a severe and habitual restraint upon the natural manifestations of feeling. We do not undertake to estimate the sense of bereavement which cultivated men or women feel by any signs of it in their

faces or manners or voices. We do not imagine that there is less real sorrow at one of our most silent funerals than in a house or hovel which resounds with an Oriental wailing. There is many a heart in Christian congregations and schools and homes that carries an habitual sense of shame and guiltiness, and has many secret paroxysms of distress on account of its own mean selfishness and hateful wickedness, but hides itself from the observation of others under a smiling face and gay manners. Sometimes this dissatisfaction with self makes a person irritable, and vexes those who, if they understood the symptom rightly, would pity him and try to bring him to Him who casteth out devils.

3. Conviction of sin is not mainly a matter of feeling. The Bible question is not, "How badly do you feel about your sins?" but "How frankly are you willing to confess them?" and "How ready are you to forsake them?" Are you a sinner? Do you know it? Do you acknowledge it? Do you submit yourself to the judgment of God concerning it? Do you confess

that you deserve all that he threatens, even everlasting banishment from him into the dismal hopelessness which his word figures under such dreadful symbols? That is conviction of sin, no matter how calm and tranquil you are—no matter how (being so used to this conviction) it has lost its power to agitate you or to pierce you with sudden and sharp pangs. To know and be willing to confess,—that is conviction. To feel more or less is incidental, not essential.

4. Our brother need not “shrink from quiet acceptances” if they evidence themselves as real acceptances. They cannot be more quiet than that of the Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot or that of Lydia at the river-side prayer-meeting. But both those quiet recipients of God’s offered mercy started promptly forward in the way of confessing and serving Christ. So will those who really accept Christ now. If they have been living by business which is immoral or wicked or harmful to others, they will quit it at once at whatever sacrifice. If they have been addicted to pleasures concerning which they doubt whether Christ



approves them, they will give them up for his sake. And the many right and proper things which they have been accustomed to do they will continue to do just as before. The world will see no difference, but Christ will see, and they will feel a difference, suddenly or gradually. They will do such right and proper things, not merely because they are right and proper, but also as pleasing to Christ. The commonest duty in home or school, or store or bank, or shop or stable, will be done as to the Lord, and not unto men. The simplest kindness or courtesy will be shown as if one were giving a drink of water to the thirsty Jesus. Accepted as a Saviour from sin, humbly, heartily, thankfully, he is accepted as the Guide and the Lord of one's life. This "new obedience"—obedience in the new spirit of loving discipleship—is the only sure evidence that the "acceptance," whether "quiet" or eager, was real, and that the conviction of sin which led to it was genuine.

"John the Baptist has gone before" in our congregations and Sabbath-schools.

His shaggy coat and leather girdle have long ago ceased to be noticed, but his solemn "Repent ye" has kept sounding in the ears of the generation. Their busy, bustling, eager worldliness has not kept them from hearing it. They know that they ought to repent. They would not respect God if he was satisfied with them. They know it would spoil heaven to let them into it as they are. They may try to forget this by thinking how much better they are than some church-members, but they would not think it a very nice heaven that such church-members could get into, or themselves either. The true heaven, the pure heaven, God's heaven,—if they are ever going to it they must just "right-about-face," Moody's excellent definition of John the Baptist's "Repent." There are multitudes of such people as I have described everywhere in city and country. They are convicted of sin. Their hearts are heavy and tired with a dull, habitual dissatisfaction. The ribald scoffs of atheism, the "dirt philosophy" of materialism, the "soft solder" of æstheticism,

the self-flattery of liberalism,—all have failed to give them rest.

If, when you preach Christ crucified to such people, and make them understand that only to confessing sinners does he address his kind call, “Come unto me,” they come, accept, obey, do not forbid them. Such coming is the best evidence and the right result of true conviction of sin.

## XLI.

### A CALM CONVERSION.

**I**N my first pastoral charge there was a candid, thoughtful, undemonstrative man, whom I first observed as a constant attendant at the church, always appearing to give close attention to the preaching and always reverential in his demeanor. He was a teacher in one of the public schools. When I found opportunity to converse personally with him, I found him giving ready and full assent to the truth of the gospel as he was accustomed to hear it, equally ready to confess his own need of it, but sorry to say that he was quite destitute of religious feeling. Clear conviction he had, but it was altogether calm and cool, unaccompanied by the emotion which seemed to him appropriate, and without which, he supposed, any religious action would be hypocrisy. I endeavored to show him that

conviction, not feeling, should guide to action—that if he knew himself a sinner and knew Christ a Saviour, it was reasonable and scriptural to confess the sinfulness and accept the Saviour. For some weeks he pondered the subject in this new view of it with quickened attention to preaching and candid readiness for conversation with his pastor whenever there was opportunity for it.

Our weekly prayer-meetings were held in an old-fashioned lecture-room, in which one aisle extended from the door in front to the desk in the farther end, with one row of long seats on each side of it, each seat reaching from the aisle to the wall. We sat also in an old-fashioned way, the women on one side and the men on the other. At one of these meetings I read the story of Philip and the eunuch in the eighth chapter of Acts. I called attention to the contrast between this instance of genuine conversion and that of the jailer. The jailer cried out in terror, "What must I do to be saved?" The eunuch, quietly reading in the book of Isaiah of Him who

was led as a lamb to the slaughter, so ignorant that he did not know of whom the prophet wrote, readily accepted Philip's explanation of it as then just fulfilled in Jesus—believed, was baptized and “went his way rejoicing.” No terror, no agitation, no violent emotion, but simple, clear conviction of truth, promptly and properly acted upon.

I expressed the opinion that some present had as clear convictions, as correct views of Christ and his offered salvation, as the Ethiopian had after Philip preached Jesus to him. The difference was, that the Ethiopian at once acted according to that conviction in obedient acceptance of the truth, and those to whom I was speaking had not done so; they were waiting until they should find themselves feeling as the jailer felt when waked from sleep by the earthquake. I frankly declared my opinion that they had no need thus to wait; that it would probably be in vain thus to wait; that they ought to accept the leading of God's Spirit in the very way in which he was giving it to them. Seeing the truth just as the Ethiopian saw it, contemplating it calmly just as

he did, why not act just as he did? There was unusual stillness and attention all through the room. I believed that there were a number in the room to whom the word was applicable, but I had on my heart especially my friend the teacher. Pressing the thought upon the consideration of the class of persons whom I had described, I urged them to do just as the eunuch did. "Will you?" I asked, and paused, not expecting a reply, but giving them opportunity to ponder the question. Quite near the door a woman rose from her seat and stood silent. Perceiving what she intended by the signal, I said, "One of our friends has risen to signify her acceptance of what I have proposed: are there not others who will do the same?" How I longed to see that thoughtful man rise! But he did not, and no others did. After waiting sufficiently for this, I gave opportunity for others to speak and pray, and the meeting proceeded. Soon the teacher rose, and in his own calm, quiet way expressed his conviction that what the pastor had proposed was both reasonable and scriptural. He saw no reason



why one should not act thus according to reasonable conviction. He asked his friends to pray that he might be helped and strengthened to do so.

At the close of the meeting, joining his wife at the door and giving her his arm, he asked her who the lady was that rose, thinking, as she sat farther back in the room than he, she might have seen, as he did not. She informed him that it was herself. It was a joyful surprise to him, for in that strange reticence which so often possesses those nearest each other concerning that which most nearly and solemnly concerns them, no word had passed between them on the subject of their personal interest in religion. He had not been at all aware of his wife's interest in the subject, and felt no assurance of her sympathy with him in the step he had taken. Now he discovered that she had even stepped into the narrow path before him, and it will easily be believed that they "went on their way rejoicing." He became a deacon afterward, and went on many years faithfully serving the church and "leading a quiet and peace-

able life in all godliness and honesty." Long after my removal to other scenes of labor I was visiting the old place, and had a leisurely interview with that friend, in which he recalled with deep interest and thankfulness his early experience, and told me of the kind way in which the Lord had led him ever since. The interview was a precious one, and it was our last. He seemed in his ordinary health then, for all that I noticed. But a few weeks afterward I learned that he was gone. He was ready.

## XLII.

### COBDEN AND BRIGHT.

“WHEN the question was one to be settled by the rules that govern man’s substantial interests, or even by the standing rules (if such an expression may be allowed) of morality, then Cobden was unequaled. So long as the controversy could be settled after this fashion, ‘I will show you that in such a course you are acting injuriously to your own interests,’ or ‘You are doing what a fair and just man ought not to do,’—so long as argument of that kind could sway the conduct of men, then there was no one who could convince as Cobden could.” Thus Mr. Justin McCarthy describes one of the great leaders of the movement which repealed the English corn laws.

Of the other he says: “He was what Mr.

Cobden was not, an orator of the very highest class. It is doubtful whether English public life has ever produced a man who possessed more of the qualifications of a great orator than Mr. Bright."

McCarthy tells us how these two men became yokefellows in the great movement in which they became so famous ; or rather he lets Mr. Bright tell it in his own words : "I was in Leamington, and Mr. Cobden called on me. I was then in the depths of grief, I may almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called on me as my friend and addressed me, as you may suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said : 'There are thousands and thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives and mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we

will never rest until the corn laws are repealed.' ”

Take notice that it was the calm, unimpassioned, business-like Cobden, whom the historian hesitates to call an orator, who made that appeal. Did he “count it an argument”? I do not know. But who will assign it any low rank among the forces which brought to pass the repeal of the corn laws?

The repeal of the corn laws was the abolition of a monopoly which forced bread to high prices for the enriching of corn-growers. The corn-growers were in England, and are always in every land, a highly useful class. They injured and wronged the people only by exacting too high a price for necessary food. We have a more powerful class in this age, in our land, who enrich themselves and impoverish the people by transforming grain into drinks that are unwholesome, and the free use of which is demoralizing, and which they succeed in selling at enormous profit.

The abolition of this traffic is to be effected in two ways: (1) By persuading the

people to withhold their patronage from it ;  
(2) When they are thus made sober enough,  
by making and enforcing effective laws.

The men now most useful toward this end are the men, like Mr. Cobden, who say, "I will show you that in patronizing and sustaining the liquor-traffic you are acting injuriously to your own interests, and you are doing what a fair and just man ought not to do." And yet the coolest Cobden of them all can hardly help saying, "There are thousands and thousands of homes in our country at this moment where wives and mothers and children are [enduring what is worse than] dying of hunger. . . . We will never rest until the rum-power is abolished." And every true man's thought of her who sits queen in his home or is lying still and cold in the chamber gives point and power to the argument.

### XLIII.

ELDER WYCKOFF.

HE was of the Baptist denomination; and quite decided and strenuous in maintaining its distinguishing tenets. Yet he was eminently a Christian, well known and thoroughly believed in as such by all who knew him, and notably kind and courteous and charitable to all. He was thoroughly evangelical in his opinions, and, while kind and courteous to those of any faith and of none, he specially and tenderly loved all who loved our Lord Jesus Christ and trusted in his atoning blood. All such, of whatever denomination, were brothers and sisters to Elder Wyckoff, and he had a happy way of making them feel that he was a most affectionate brother (or father) to them.

When I entered the ministry in the Presbyterian Church he was an old man—not



far from eighty years of age. It was always a comfort to me to meet him. He never put forward the topics on which we held opposite opinions, but talked of those greater things which we held alike, and which we both alike held to be the essentials of our common faith. His whole manner was exceedingly significant of fatherly sympathy. He knew some of my needs better than I did. He had had before I was born, the experiences which were then new to me and had had time to study out their meaning. He made me feel that he sincerely wished me to become as good and useful a minister as I possibly could, and most gladly would he do all he could to help me. He seemed most solicitous to help me grow in grace, in prayerfulness, in piety. Yet he had very decided opinions on the questions of theology which are deemed most important, and could express them clearly, yet did so always kindly.

When Elder Wyckoff had become wholly disabled from preaching—being, I am quite sure, more than fourscore years of age—he and his aged wife were living with their

daughter and son-in-law as one pleasant family. There were no children. I once exchanged pulpits with my brother, and have the most pleasing recollections not only of the perfect hospitality with which I was entertained, but especially of the kind treatment which I received from the aged father. He had suffered a partial paralysis, considerably impairing his powers of locomotion and of speech, but not at all diminishing the clearness and force of his thinking. He was a large, heavy man and moved about with some difficulty, yet his love for the sanctuary was such that he went twice that day to its services—once in the place where he was accustomed to worship, and once (in his generous courtesy) where he would listen to my preaching. In the evening, after the public service, we sat together at his fireside and talked of things interesting to us as Christians and ministers. I was glad to listen to his suggestions in regard to preaching. I had tried to preach the gospel that day and to persuade my hearers to accept it.

“I perceive,” said my aged friend, “that

you speak of the gospel as an offer; I have been accustomed rather to speak of it as a proclamation."

He spoke with some difficulty and very slowly, thus giving me time attentively to weigh his words and to study the distinctions which he wished to make. I was not then sharp enough in the theological dispute on that topic to see at once what distinction he made between "offer" and "proclamation," but very soon he made it apparent.

He slowly continued: "I presume that you hold to a general atonement?"

"Certainly," I replied, catching a glimpse of his meaning.

As slowly as before he proceeded: "Well, I have no controversy—with my brethren—on that point—provided they give me evidence—that they hold to the necessity of any atonement at all."

Here more light broke into my mind, and I saw that those who considered our doctrine unscriptural did so by misunderstanding us to teach some vague and general notion of God's good-will to men moving

him to offer pardon and life to them all, without any real expiation satisfying his justice. How they could so misunderstand us I could not see then, nor can I see now. It was pleasant to find that Elder Wyckoff had been too attentive and too candid thus to misunderstand me.

I had time to think all this rapidly, and there was nothing in his gentle and fatherly yet respectful manner to rouse my youthful combativeness and disturb my ability to understand him.

He proceeded: "But it has always been more satisfactory to me—and it has seemed to me more scriptural—to conceive of the atonement as particular" [I observed that he did not use the word "limited," which I had supposed to be the antithetic term to "general" in that application]; "and when I think of our blessed Lord—the Lord of glory, the eternal Son of God—leaving his heavenly throne, coming down to this world, humbling himself to all that shame and submitting to all that anguish for poor, unworthy, hell-deserving *me*—" Here his deep emotion entirely overpowered him, and he

quite broke down into tears and sobbing. He soon recovered himself, apologized for his weakness, ascribing it to his paralytic affection, and was able to continue the conversation. There was no need, however, of finishing that broken sentence. Its conclusion was obvious enough, as it must be, I think, to every reader.

As I went to my bed that night I said, in my heart, "How I wish that the eminent theologians who are startling the Church with the noise of their controversy about the extent of the atonement, firing their thundering broadsides from the decks of their antagonistic quarterlies, could sit down together at the sacred spot to which this clear-headed and tender-hearted old man has led me this evening, and just look up there to the cross and to Him who hangs bleeding on it!" I felt sure that there they would just stop disputing. Each heart would melt with the "particular" appropriating thought, "All that is for poor, unworthy, hell-deserving me," and both would go thence hand in hand, prepared to unite in saying to any and every fellow-man whom

they might anywhere find, "All that is for you, if you acknowledge your need of it and are willing to take it."

In the more kindly discussions, in the more earnest co-operation in practical labors, in the better mutual understandings and in the happy reunions of more recent years, the noise of that particular controversy has almost wholly ceased.

In general, the disposition to contend harshly and angrily with fellow-Christians has abated somewhat since the middle of this century. But we have still many unsettled questions, and on some of them we still hear not only earnest but harsh voices. Is it not evermore true that tender experience of the love of Christ abates that harshness, and that the nearer we stand to the cross when we examine our differences, the less reason for angry contention over those differences does there appear?

## XLIV.

### GOD'S POEM.

WHERE we read in our English version "We are God's *workmanship*" (Eph. 2 : 9) no violence would be done to the original if we should read "We are God's *poem*." This is not intended as a criticism upon our version. The word which the translators chose is a better rendering than the word "poem" would be. Yet there is a richness and beauty in the sentence which can be more fully realized by considering the peculiar word which the apostle wrote. It is ποιημα, "poiema," the very word from which (see *Webster*) our word "poem" is derived. It comes in the Greek from the word ποιεω, "poieo," which means to do or to make. Poiema is a thing made. But what vast and various meaning is there in the word *make*! To *make* a shoe or a bonnet, to *make* a purchase, to *make* a



mistake, to *make* money, to *make* a bed, to *make* a picture, to *make* friends, to *make* a speech, a song, a drama,—how like a live thing the word leaps and springs from one grade or shade of significance to another! To what humble utilities it stoops! To what lofty ideals it mounts!

In no low sense of *making* are Christians "God's *workmanship*"—no *mechanical* sense. We are his *work* in a higher sense than we intimate by the word "handiwork"—in a higher sense, doubtless, than we express by the phrase "*work* of art." There is nothing of human workmanship to which we can compare it and not be obliged to feel, "It is greater than that; that is only a hint *toward* it, not a representation of it." But is there not in our word *poem* something that uplifts our thoughts toward a better conception?

A poem is that which utters the poet's best thoughts, which discloses his deepest feelings, which suggests more than it utters, more than it discloses. It makes us feel that there is in the poet and in us more than he can tell, more than words can utter

or phrases measure. We even call the poet's work *creation*.

"We are God's poem, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God fore-ordained [fore-ordered, provided or prepared] that we should walk in them." Is not a true Christian life a divine poem?

Look around you for the most thoroughly Christian lives. Study them. Read them. Let them sing themselves to you. That patient sufferer from want, from disease, from cruelty, who never murmurs, never desponds, never ceases from grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness; that burdened mother, that busy merchant, that trusted banker, that diligent farmer, that faithful teacher, in whose daily life you see the very spirit of Him who "went about doing good" in Judea and Galilee, and whose meekness and conscientiousness and steadfastness and courage are blended in harmony like that of an anthem,—is not God uttering to you in such lives his own best thoughts and deepest feelings? Do not such lives suggest to you more and deeper divine things than they exhibit?

Do not neglect to read these poems. Do not overlook them and busy yourself with searching for blots and blemishes in the paper on which they are written. Do not occupy yourself with criticising the ordinary lives of professing Christians, and scowling and scolding forth your doubts whether they have any genuine divine poetry in them. If you want to know what divine grace can do, look where it has done its best. Read it there, and then say if there is no poetry, no truth deeper than prose can utter, and which poetry can only hint and suggest.

Is it not a blessed thing to *be* one of God's *poems*? That is just what any one of us may be. His grace is sufficient for that, and it is freely offered to us, to every one of us.

## XLV.

### "WITH THE LORD."

I HAVE known the father of a family to go from their Eastern home, hundreds of miles away, to the far West—beyond the mountains, beyond the Great Lakes, beyond the great "Father of Rivers." He has gone to seek for them a new and a better home—if not of greater comforts, at least of larger opportunities. Going away thus, he has bid them "good-bye" for many weeks—weeks that, in his absence, will seem long to them. They must wait as patiently and cheerfully as they can, sustained by the expectation of going by and by to be with him in the place which he is preparing for them.

Very imperfect and dim are all their ideas of the place and of the long, strange journey they must take to go to it. They read of the vast prairies over which they will journey, stretching away in monotonous

level far as the eye can reach, in strange contrast to the hilly diversity of their native landscape. They are told of the mighty river on whose turbid torrent a mercantile navy floats—so different from the clear streams that flow near their home. They study maps and geographical descriptions and railway-routes, with accurate computation of distances, but the most mature and intelligent of them will afterward find that only the actual journey and actual sight can give them a full and adequate apprehension. The letters of the husband and father, written with his best powers of description, fall far short of giving them a satisfactory view of the scenery through which he travels or the places to which he comes. To the little children, untraveled and uninstructed in geography, all is exceedingly vague and dim. Their father has gone quite beyond all that is familiar and intelligible to them, quite into their unknown. To them his letters bring most imperfect conceptions of the place and the way. But there is one thought which is clear to them and unspeakably precious. It is that when they

shall have made the journey they shall be with their father, wherever he is. And however the mother's knowledge or accurate conception of the geography may be superior to the children's, still to her, as to them, the one thing which gives surpassing interest to it all, and fills her with satisfying anticipation, is that he is there with whom it is her highest earthly felicity to be.

I have known an honest, brave young man to come over the sea, from the European land of his birth, to this Western land of promise and of hope, leaving there a truthful, loving maiden solemnly betrothed to him, and consenting to his coming so far and tarrying so long out of her sight in the hope that one day he shall have won for her a home, to which she shall then come and be always with him. In all the months or years of their separation no study of books or maps and no attentive perusal of his letters can give her such knowledge of America that, when she comes, she will not find much to wonder at and of which to say, "The half was not told me." Not unlikely also she will have

imagined some things which will not be realized. She will not find some things which she looked for, but when she finds him unchanged in his manliness and love, when he leaps on the deck as soon as the vessel which brings her touches the wharf, when he meets her and kisses her and shows himself ready for the fulfillment of their vow, her heart is satisfied. Oh how superior are even earthly love and trust to all that can depend upon place or circumstance! How mysterious and how marvelous and how mighty is that human experience that is fulfilled in simply *being with* an object of pure and true affection!

"So shall we ever be with the LORD." There is deep meaning in the word "Lord" as those affectionate and reverent men and women applied it to Jesus. It was a title expressive of high dominion, of high authority, of proprietorship and right to possess and use and sway. It was a title fit for kings from their subjects, lowly or lofty. It was a title applied to Jehovah by devout Jews, familiar to them as the rendering of the name of Jehovah into the Greek ver-



sion of their Scriptures. Yet it was expressive also of an affectionate and trustful reverence. It denoted a homage and submission such as loyal hearts love to pay, not a harshly-enforced submission—"Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord." No true wife can be satisfied unless she thinks her husband worthy of such reverent love.

All chivalrous loyalty to chieftains, all dutiful devotion to kings, all deepest and truest love to husbands which the happiest realms and happiest homes of earth have exemplified,—all these combined cannot equal the devotion and loyalty with which John and Peter and Thomas and the Marys used to call Jesus LORD. No less fervent and reverent was Paul's love of Jesus: "So shall we ever be with the Lord." He does not expatiate upon the great and many things which the Lord will do for them who have been faithful to him. He does not enumerate nor describe rich gifts and high dignities which he will bestow. To *be with him* is enough. This includes all that a loyal and loving heart can desire. For this

the Christian's deepest longing goes up, even as that of the migrating family for reunion with their head—just as the trustful maiden's heart sent its loyal yearning even across the sea. Not for the rich abundance of America's harvests did she long; not for the autumnal splendor of its forests; not for its golden promise to industry and enterprise; not for the beauty or majesty of its lakes and rivers nor for the awful grandeur of its cataract; but for the heart-satisfying privilege of being *with him* whose presence is her *home*.

"We shall *ever* be with the Lord." We may give the adverb its fullest meaning and strongest emphasis. That home-coming shall not be like these earthly, for so uncertain and so short a stay. The glad welcome to the "house not made with hands" will no more have the shadow on it of the soon-coming "good-bye." We shall there have come home to stay "for good" and for ever. We "shall go no more out."

After all, what will it be to *be with* the Lord? Shall we see him with eyes like

these? with bodily vision? What is vision? What is sight to glorified spirits in bodies celestial? All that we know and experience of sight with these feeble eyes, needing so soon the poor help of these glasses,—all this earthly seeing is as little to be compared with the “beatific vision” as a blind man’s slow groping about objects with his hands is to be compared with our raptured

“Sight of vernal bloom, or summer’s rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine.”

All that it could be to see Jesus as Mary saw him at her home, as John saw him standing on the lake-shore, as the three saw him transfigured, or could have seen him if not overpowered by the dazzling vision,—all that all such experiences could be is realized to those who are *with the Lord*—all this and more. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” All that sight means to us and all that it reveals, all that bodily nearness or affectionate embraces can express, all that we

feel of power and influence and joy in what we express by the word *presence*,—all this, realized toward the Lord Jesus, is the blessedness for which

“We a little longer wait,  
But how little none can know.”

In patience of faith and hope let us wait for his appearing; and as to the dear ones who have gone from us, and those so often going, let us “comfort one another with these words:”

“Jerusalem! my happy home!  
Name ever dear to me! . . .  
Then shall my labors have an end,  
When I thy joys shall see.”

THE END.











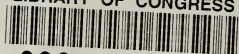






121  
8915

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 022 216 710 3